

# WI RE

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

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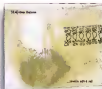
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Matthew photographed in San Francisco by Jo Ann To

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# THE WIRE TAPPER 10 FREE 30 TRACK DOUBLE CD

The latest volume in our ongoing series of new music compilations will be a 30 track double CD that will be given away FREE with all copies of next month's October issue, both UK and overseas.

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The October issue of *The Wire*, complete with *The Wire Tapper 10*, will be on sale from 25 September. For more information, email [sube@thewire.co.uk](mailto:sube@thewire.co.uk)



# Letters

Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK  
Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, email [letters@thewire.co.uk](mailto:letters@thewire.co.uk)  
Letters should include a full name and address



Will we, won't we?

## The name blame game

Many thanks to Charlemagne Palestine for clearing up any confusion about his name via your Letters page (*The Wire* 234). Mr P suggests that my 1996 interview in *EST* magazine is to blame for putting about the idea that he was originally named Charles Martin. Unfortunately, I can't take all the credit for this error – we didn't actually discuss the matter in the interview, and I was only repeating what I had read in Edward Stockland's 1993 book *Minimalism: Origins, Perhaps*. I misread Stockland's comment a little. Still, any mistake that leads to a photo of the maestro himself appearing in your pages can't be all bad.

Brian Duguid via email

## Critical points

Let me say first that your magazine still continues to achieve what you strive for; it's eclectic, compassionate and compelling in its examination of such diverse, sometimes 'other' forms of modern music. Nevertheless, I feel the need to point out that some recent reviews have felt jaded and rather comfortable with that notion. This does not include interviews, but some of the Soundcheck essays.

Two recent examples: David Toop's interpretation of David Sylvian's *Blemish* (*The Wire* 232) seemed to me an excuse for him to lose his way in 'eclectic ambience', or the rather clinical, detached stance both Davids take in exploring 'electronic', free jazz and pop. The intellectualism of the piece seemed like Sylvian had made the perfect artefact for Toop to calmly chew on. Why not Ben Watson instead, who would surely have been puzzled at hearing anarchic hero David Bailey offset by Sylvian's selfconscious beauty and restraint.

Meanwhile, in Jim Hayes's review of David Keenan's new book on the 80s English Industrial underground, *England's Hidden Reverse* (Print Run, *The Wire* 234),

both author and reviewer are clearly gaga on that era of music and know a little too much to let a more neutral investigator join in. Why not someone like Clive Bell as critic instead, whose dullness and likeable modesty would have been slightly more subjective, or perhaps offered a new perspective?

All these writers and artists have important things to say, but sometimes it pays to drop critics in the deep end, instead of letting them show off about their chosen subject. The standard must remain as high as it is now.

Chris Jones London, UK

## Mutt 'n' Jeff

I understand that rebutting a review of an album to which one wrote the liner notes seems like overkill, but there's a point in Nick Southgate's review of Gary Lucas's *Operators Are Standing By* (Soundcheck, *The Wire* 234) that calls for clarification. Southgate writes "Lucas is, of course, most famous as a group member, first with Captain Beefheart and latterly with Jeff Buckley." This gives the impression that Lucas was a member of Jeff Buckley's group, which he was not. Lucas's band Gods And Monsters was a going concern when Buckley joined in 1991, and it remained a going concern after Buckley left in 1992 to form his own group. Lucas appeared as a guest artist, not a group member, on Buckley's solo debut *Groce*, playing guitar on the title track and "Mojo Pin", both of which Lucas co-wrote and both of which Lucas and Buckley had performed as members of Gods And Monsters. It is possible that Buckley extended the invitation to Lucas to play on those tracks as a professional courtesy. It's more likely, however, that neither Buckley nor anyone else in his 'group' (which Southgate seems to hold in some esteem) was capable of doing justice to the challenging guitar parts Lucas composed.

Glen Kenny New York, USA

## Horn blower

It was lovely to see Cedric Im Brooks get a well-deserved profile (Bites, *The Wire* 234), and I thank Clive Bell for doing so. There is one error, though, that needs pointing out, namely that Ba Ba Brooks was not the original trumpeter for The Skatalites. That honour belongs to Johnny 'Dizzy' Moore, who is still alive and well on Mountairview Avenue in Kingston, Jamaica. Readers in Seattle in fact had the opportunity to see both Cedric and Johnny onstage together back in November 2001, when they performed with the remaining members of The Mystic Revelation Of Rastafari.

Mark Williams Washington DC, USA

## Nubla of the matter

Despite what Sr Noe Cornago Photo suggests (Letters, *The Wire* 234), I love Spain and Spanish music – just not Victor Nubla. And I don't love Roger Scruton. I just think that however warped his political views, his ideas on music might be worthy of consideration.

Andy Hamilton via email

## Parting shot

I think it's time to put this sucker to bed. I'm aware this must be tedious for the majority of your readers but I feel I cannot allow Richard Lough's laughable critique (Letters, *The Wire* 233) of my (arguably also laughable) critique of Derek Bailey (Letters, *The Wire* 231) to pass without comment. To begin with, I didn't feel the need to "explain just how Bailey's music was no good" because I didn't say Bailey's music was "no good" per se. As to having to explain how "we've all been listening to him since the 60s WRONG!", well this is such palpable nonsense, no comment is really required. Apparently I have "no argument". Er, well, even a cursory glance at my letter will reveal a pretty

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## Letters

obvious argument, an argument you may agree with or disagree with, but "an argument" nonetheless. I won't retell it here, because if you take the trouble to read the letter without descending into apologetic outrage at the very idea of some upstart daring to criticise Dame Derek Bailey, then the argument is childishly obvious.

Somewhat revealing that Mr Leigh goes on to attribute my criticism of Bailey to an "attempt to be different for the sake of it" – the implication seeming to be that I am some crazed apostate amid the contented flock of Wire readers, all of whom are religiously devoted to the great and good works of St Derek of Bailey (an implication not even I would seek to promulgate). For the record, I do think Derek Bailey is a good and significant artist – but no one is perfect (not even John Coltrane), and when *The Wire* is reduced to making a David Sylvian album the lead review in Soundcheck, purely (it would appear) on the basis of Derek Bailey's presence, you begin to wonder when exactly it was that *The Wire* became a fanzine. But maybe I do David Toop a disservice, maybe he was allowed to prattle on about (chortle) David Sylvian because he used to be in a band called Japan.

On a related note, I note the letter from George Willis (The Wire 233) bemoaning the lack of "vibrol" in reviews in Soundcheck. I imagine George, like myself, is not advocating vibrol so much as proper music criticism from your reviewers. As he pointed out, old lags like Ian Penman (and, though it pains me to admit it, Ben Watson) are about our only hope when it comes to actual music criticism as opposed to hyperbolic gushing. I ask you, is there all that much difference between Bob Dylan being reviewed in *Moby* and Keji Hane being reviewed in *The Wire*? Both are assured of good reviews, with a side helping of hagiography, no matter what clasptrap they serve up (and they do). Still, I suppose *The Wire* can always rely on musicians like Eddie Peverest to provide thought-provoking, insightful and CRITICAL discourse – which is just as well as most of *The Wire*'s current crop of journalists don't appear to have the stomach for the job. Ah well, there's always the Letters page.

Keith Coyne London, UK

## Return fire

Just wanted to write you guys to ask when are you going to do a Derek Bailey cover issue? Have only just discovered the music of the grand old man myself but it's turning my head around in some very strange ways. I can tell you. Having been a subscriber for years, I realised I'd never seen an issue, even in the back issues, with Derek on the cover and found it quite strange considering how much you feature him in the mag. He really is quite an incredible musician and I really loved his honesty in the Invisible Jukebox you did with him (*The Wire* 178).

Keep up the good work, don't let in the critics,

they just need something to complain about, and thanks for all the great music and musicians you've made me aware of.

Chris Carr via email

## Identity parade

I recently picked up *The Wire* 233 for the Michael Gira interview, and was also pleased to see a short piece on rapper MF Doom. But I was struck by the opening lines of Masi Reeves's article: "Like most forms of electronic music, HipHop has a long tradition of allowing its performers to create endlessly mutating identities. With the possible exception of The Wu-Tang Clan's Method Man, no one has indulged in this possibility for personal reinvention with as much gusto as Daniel Dumile Jr."

Uh, what? I find it hard to believe that Reeves is wholly unaware of a certain Kool Keith. The fact that his name shows up not once in the entire article makes the omission seem almost deliberate.

Andy Walke Cincinnati, USA

## The empire strikes back

Thanks to *The Wire* for reviewing my book *Sounds English: Transnational Popstar Music* (Pint Run, The Wire 233), particularly two years after it was published [Your publishers, University of Illinois Press, only bothered to send us a review copy this spring – Ed]. Your magazine has a reputation for enjoying repeated swipes at academics who venture to write about music, so I was relieved to see that Brian Morton's review managed to note a few positive aspects of the book. However, apart from the nipping-and-a spelling error, I did find some of his comments indicative of the parochialism and provincialism of much British (or should I say English) criticism.

Morton claims to suffer an "impatience with politically correct place names" and so objects to my use of the Maori name Aotearoa alongside the more familiar New Zealand. A small country in the South Pacific is probably of little interest to a metropolitan Britisher, but to register the legitimacy of Aotearoa is to acknowledge New Zealand's colonial past, unresolved land claims and continuing tensions between Maori and Pakeha (white European settlers). Names do matter.

Secondly, Morton is clearly on a Joseph Conrad kick at the moment. To argue that "Conrad remains the basic text on how diasporas, imaginary homelands and language-codes for desire and belonging are formed" and that I've missed "the whole Conradian thrust of much British-Asian music and poetry" is to assume that South Asians do not have their own narratives and other ways of evoking home and away, travel and loss, formed in their own histories of colonialism, indentured labour, Partition, wars, exile and postcolonial

migrations. Now I've got nothing against the famous Polish/British writer, but give the Dots Brits some credit for their own traditions of transnational expression and critique. Though Morton has obviously spent more time than me with the work of Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski, maybe a course in Postcolonialism 101 can help him with further reviews. Or should that be Colonialism 101? Sorry, but I thought Little Englandism or Brit-centrism was something one found in other pop mags, not *The Wire*.

Nabeel Zuberi Auckland, Aotearoa/New Zealand

Thanks to Nabeel Zuberi for his comments. As a former academic, I've no interest in taking swipes at those who want to write about popular music. My comment about "politically correct place names" was entirely in context, given Nabeel's own apparent unease about "British" vs-*à-vis* "English". As an Irish Scot, I'm possibly oversensitive to such things. As an admirer – rather than disciple – of both Joseph Conrad and Edward Said, I hope I'm adequately sensitive to the way national and transnational narratives are created. I completely respect Nabeel's right to articulate as many new perspectives as he has, passports and places called home, but I'm afraid in both book and letter I find his case not proven (which is still a possible verdict in Scots law at least). As he graciously hints, there were some very positive aspects to my review. Sounds English asks admirably pointed questions about the 'ethnicity' of popular music, and no one expects glib answers to those. However, it does also pose questions to which there are blindingly obvious answers, and this is where I found the autobiographical perspective unhelpful. Look forward to the next book, though – Brian Morton, Scotland/Alba (or is it strictly Dainda, or the Gaelteach?)

## Corrections

Issue 234: The New World America cover feature left out contact information for Six Organs Of Admittance's Holy Mountain releases. Find them at: [www.madheaven.com](http://www.madheaven.com). In Global Ear, trumpeter Paolo Fresu was wrongly identified as Corsican in the picture caption. Fresu is in fact Sardinian, as stated in the text. In Soundcheck, the review of the V/M compilation "It's Fan-Dan-Do!" misnamed James Miller's Solypsis project as Solypso. In Pint Run, the publisher of John Cale's biography Sedition And Alchemy should have read Peter Owen, not Backbeat. The Directory missed out contact details for Høven to accompany the Soundcheck review of Niplets: The Lecture Hall Boogie. The address is: 1-8-25-1103 Ebisuohama, Naniwa-ku, Osaka, 556-0013 Japan, [augen@gtl.com](mailto:augen@gtl.com). As a postscript to last month's letter from Burning Shed pointing out that the label is British, not German, the error was not reviewer Julian Cowley's. It crept in during the production process. □

**Coming next month: *The Wire Tapper 10*, an exclusive 30 track double CD that will be given away FREE with all copies of the October issue. See page 5 for more details. *The Wire's* October issue will be on sale from 25 September**

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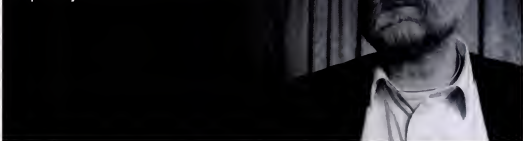


months 20

# Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.

Compiled by The Trawler



Art on the fly: Peter Brötzmann

The inexpressible *Fluxus*; *Works On Paper* 1959-1964 is a new monograph commemorating an exhibition of paintings by **Peter Brötzmann** that was presented earlier this year by the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Inspired by an earlier exhibition of Brötzmann's visual art at the Kunstmuseum in Ystad, Sweden (see *Cross Platform*, *The Wire* 226), the exhibition featured a series of the great saxophonist's early works on paper, all of which are now reproduced in the book, which is being published by *Atavistic* as part of its *Unheard Music Series*. The book also comes with a CD-ROM containing exceptionally rare footage of live performances by two Brötzmann groups from 1963 and 1965, plus a film of his appearance at a 1963 *Fluxus* festival in Amsterdam (at the time Brötzmann was working as assistant to *Fluxus* star Nam June Paik). [www.atavistic.com](http://www.atavistic.com). Meanwhile, the saxophonist has just relunched his *Big* label as a vinyl only operation – more than 35 years after its last release, its opening salvo is *The Ink Is Gone*, a duet between Brötzmann and the veteran Chicago drummer Walter Perkins. [www.eremite.com](http://www.eremite.com) >>> **Thrilling Gestic** are to regroup for a weekend of music, art, film and performance on the UK's south coast next year. Entitled *REF-70*, the event will take place at Portni's Holiday Resort, Camber Sands, Sussex between 14-16 May 2004. As well as performing together as *TG*, Chris Carter, Peter "Sleazy" Christopherson, Genesis P-Orridge and Casey Fanni Tutti will all appear in other incarnations: *Col* (with Christopherson), *The Majesty* (P-Orridge) and *Carter Tutti*. The rest of the line-up for the three day event reads like a 'who's who' of industrial pioneers and acolytes, including David Bice, Cabaret Voltaire's Richard H Kirk, Lydia Lunch, Matmos, Merzbow, Jim D'Rourke, Pan Sonic, People Like Us, Scanner, Coil and Julian Cowie collaborator Theghepaulsandra and more. [www.thrillinggestic.com](http://www.thrillinggestic.com), [www.mute.com/tg/](http://www.mute.com/tg/) >>> Also decamping to Camber Sands next spring will be the fifth edition of the UK leg of *All Tomorrow's Parties*. Held over two consecutive weekends, the festival organisers have invited some of its previous 'star' curators to return to the south coast to programme one day each of this year's event. So the first weekend (26-28 March) will be curated by Mogwai, Tortoise and Shellac, while the second weekend (2-4 April) will be programmed by Stephen Malkmus, Sonic Youth, and Barry Hogan and Helen Cottage from the festival's promoters, Foundation. [www.alltomperties.com](http://www.alltomperties.com) >>> Veteran NYC art rock pioneers **Television** are to rerelease remastered and augmented

versions of their first two albums, *Marquee Moon* (1977) and *Adventure* (1978), on 23 September through Rhino Records, with a much bootlegged 1978 set *Live At The Old Waldorf* coming out on Rhino Handmade the same day. [www.rhino.com](http://www.rhino.com), [www.rhinohandmade.com](http://www.rhinohandmade.com) >>> *Haunted Weather: Resonant Spaces, Silence And Memory* is the title of *Wire* contributor **David Toop's** new book which is due to be published by *Serpent's Tail* next April. This time round, the author of *Rap Attack*, *Exotica* and *Ocean Of Sound* has conducted a "wide-ranging investigation into why we value sound, how we listen and how sound affects us at various levels of memory, physiology and environmental awareness" >>> Another *Wire* contributor, Philip Sherburne, is partly responsible for the recently launched electronic music email newsletter *Earplug*. Published twice monthly, *Earplug* features selected music news, tip sheets, CD reviews, festival grooves and features. Sherburne writes: "While some say that the music industry is in crisis, we at *Earplug* think that things couldn't be better, there's so much creativity, so much good music, so many exciting technological advances, and so many new ways of doing business." [www.earplug.co](http://www.earplug.co) >>> **Laibach** have announced their only UK show this year, at London's Scala on 12 October. Part of a European tour, the show will be the Slovenian group's first UK appearance since 1996. The date coincides with the release of *WAT*, their first new album since 1996's *Jesus Christ Superstar*. The first single from the album, "Taniz Mt Laibach", is dedicated to friendship between the German and American peoples. [www.mute.com](http://www.mute.com) >>> *Spoon/Mute Records* mark the 35th anniversary of the founding of Can with the release of *The Can DVD* on 13 October. The set, which includes two DVDs and one CD, features the classic Can documentary by Austrian DeRo Productions, covering the history of the group and rare TV footage: *The Can Free Concert*, a film of a 1972 show in Cologne; *Can Notes*, a new film that includes footage from the 1997 *Can Solo Projects Tour*; a short film made by Brian Eno to mark Can's Echo Lifetime Achievement Award, plus footage from the Echo Awards ceremony itself; an extensive photo gallery and discography; and a *Weblog* to an exclusive Can site where photos and interviews can be downloaded and printed. The audio CD includes 13 tracks of *Can Solo Recordings* and four new releases in 5.1 Surround Sound. [www.mute.com](http://www.mute.com) >>> More DVD news: A deluxe edition of *Sun Ra's* 1974 sci-fi 'oddmusical' *Space Is*

*The Place* is due out on DVD at the end of October on Plexifilm ([www.plexifilm.com](http://www.plexifilm.com)), and *claf HISTORY*, Johan Gimonprez's 1997 meditation on hijacking and terrorism with a soundtrack by David Sirel, is released in a special hardback DVD edition with essays by Slavi Zizek others. [www.artgoarts.org](http://www.artgoarts.org) >>> The legendary 60s New York free jazz label **ESP-Disk** is to issue selected titles from its catalogue in the new surround sound DVD-A format. These new reissues have been produced using *Sonature*, a new recording process that creates an authentic surround sound environment for standard DVD players, according to its developers. Among ESP-Disk's first releases in the new format are classics by Sun Ra, Albert Ayler and Patty Waters. [www.espdisk.com](http://www.espdisk.com) >>> To mark its tenth anniversary, the **Table Of The Elements** label is to release a series of 14 one-sided, limited edition vinyl LPs by a number of the musicians that have been associated with the label over the last decade. Each record will be pressed on clear vinyl, silk-screened on the reverse in fluorescent or metallic ink, and packaged in a clear vinyl sleeve. The first releases in the series, which has the overall title *Lanthanides*, are due in October and November and include works by Loran Mazza/Cane Connors, John Fahey, Rafael Tortoise and Andre Delmonno >>> Basic Release is a new reggae and dub reissue imprint launched by Berlin's **Basic Channel** label. The label's first release is *Playing It Cool*, a collaboration between producers Keith Hudson and Lloyd Bivackie Barnes that was originally released in 1981 by New York's Joint International >>> Sonic Youth's Lee Ranaldo and Jim O'Rourke have both written new pieces for the Berlin based New Music ensemble **Zeltkater**. The pieces will be premiered at forthcoming Zeltkater performances in Bern, Göttingen and Reggio between September and November. The current Zeltkater repertoire also includes works by Philip Glass, Nicolas Collins, Elliott Sharp, Merzbow, Luigi Nono and Terre Thoenitz >>> Art In General, a New York art space, is inviting artists and musicians to submit works for inclusion in **Rock's Role** (after *Ryoanji*), a new exhibition of sound art inspired by John Cage's *Ryoanji*, named after the famed Zen rock garden in Kyoto, Japan. The exhibition organisers are looking for up to 20 individual works that use sounds and methods of all kinds. The only requirement is that submissions are able to co-exist with any other sounds that might be included in the exhibition. The deadline for submissions is 27 September. [www.artingeneral.org](http://www.artingeneral.org) □

... @ [www.atavistic.com](http://www.atavistic.com)

# ERASE ERRATA

Hardcore jollies. By Marc Masters



The jagged, hectic sound of San Francisco's Erase Errata is a product of constant motion. Tuning for most of the past two years, they've tied strands of experimental punk—the pointed rant of The Fall, the dark No Wave of DNA, and the economic hardcore swing of The Minutemen—into a bracing swarm that's tight and chaotic, danceable and abstract. It's also exhausting. "We like to play short sets, because we'd rather play really high energy for 25 minutes than get tired over the course of an hour," remarks guitarist Sara Jaffe. "That gets us excited to do it every night. If it was something more meandering, I might just nod off before the show. But I can't, and that's what sustains it."

Erase Errata began in 1999, after Jaffe and bassist Ellie Erickson moved to the Bay Area, where singer Jenny Hoyton and drummer Bianca Sparta were performing as California Lightning. "We didn't think we were a band right away," says Jaffe. "It was clear that we worked well together, but I don't think we had any idea that it would become what it has." Their name, though, had been ready for a while. "I thought of it a year before we became a band," she continues. "It was more visual [than verbal]. I learned the word 'errata', and I just liked the way 'erase' looked next to it."

Name and personnel in place, things moved quickly. Erase Errata's first show came two months after their first rehearsal. "We only played four songs," Jaffe smiles. It was soon followed by a 7" on her label, Inconvenient Press. It garnered interest from New Jersey's Troubadour Records, leading to a split 7" with Black Dice and the group's debut album, 2001's *Other Animals* (reissued in the UK this month by Blast First). Recorded and mixed in just two and a half days at X-Pulsar studios in rural Michigan, the album has the

fast-forward urgency of a unit for whom containing energy is much harder than generating it. Meshing Hoyton's snapped vocals, Jaffe's right-angled guitar, Erickson's pointillist bass and Sparta's aerobic drumming, *Other Animals* is stunningly sharp for a group so young recording so quickly.

In contrast, Erase Errata's new album, *At Crystal Palace*, was crafted in a comparatively luxurious two weeks. Most of the songs were honed on recent tours, but a few were written in the studio, and "Harvester" reprises "A Short Saint Harvest" from the debut 7", only this time with Hoyton's lyrics sung in Spanish. The album's manic energy retains the spontaneity of *Other Animals*, but the songs are denser, with swirling layers that underline rather than obscure individual sounds. "A big part of our aesthetic is to be able to hear distinct elements doing different things simultaneously," says Jaffe. There's also more studio experimentation, as in "Surprise It's Easter", whose snaky twist ends in a frantic backward version of itself. "We definitely wanted to take advantage of the extra time," she adds. "We just wanted to be able to mess around more."

Erase Errata have quickly gained the attention of like-minded veterans, most famously Sonic Youth, who invited them to participate in All Tomorrow's Parties festival in LA, 2002, and later to support them on a US tour. During that stint, they also played with Kim Gordon under the name Anxious Rats. "At our first show with Sonic Youth last summer," recalls Jaffe, "Bianca and I were in the balcony watching them, and as a joke we said, 'Let's have a punk band like Kim Gordon!' And then Bianca actually asked her." True to their spontaneous origins, no recording plans exist. "I don't think it's that kind of project," she laughs. The association with Sonic Youth did produce a split single

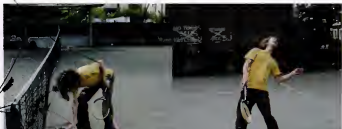
earlier this year, featuring songs about pop star Mariah Carey. While the pairing was proposed by the label, Namack Records, "the theme we came up with on our own," asserts Jaffe. "Basically because Jenny and Kim bonded over a Mariah Carey fascination."

A more unexpected collaboration arose in June in the form of *Dancing Machine*, an EP of Erase Errata remixes by Kid606, Matmos, Adult, and Kevin Blodhorn. "In San Francisco, there's a lot of mixing of genres and people who do all kinds of things," explains Jaffe. "We like a lot of the people here doing electronic music, and because we think our music is dance music in a certain way, we thought it would be fun to collaborate with them. Kid606 and Adult were the only ones given the original separate tracks. Drew [Daniel] from Matmos said that because they had the fully mixed song to work with, it was like a cross between a cover and a remix. And we have no idea what Kevin Blodhorn's source material was. Apparently there's something from our songs in it, but it's unrecognizable even to us."

Erase Errata's future promises more forward motion. While Hoyton is also busy with her solo project *Paradise Island* (her debut LP *Lines Are Infinitely Free* is a fascinating set of homemade experiments), and Jaffe has briefly toured her own pop-inflected solo work, the group reconvene in autumn for jaunts across the US and Europe. Their goal remains keeping themselves and their audience moving. "We're definitely very conscious of the crowd," concludes Jaffe. "Because ultimately we want to see people getting into it and dancing around and enjoying themselves." □ *At Crystal Palace* is out this month on Blast First. *Sonic Youth/Erase Errata split 7"* is out now on Namack.



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# LEAFCUTTER JOHN

"Maybe I'm working stuff out of my system, like taking a sauna and having stuff come out of your skin," asks Leafcutter John a question in an interview, and he'll give you an deft and articulate answer formulated by the need to understand for himself the sources of inspiration that fuel his music. Toss him a question during the Q&A section of one of his unpredictable performances, though, and you'll hear that inspirational motor tuning itself up and taking a line feed direct from the carburettor of his subconscious. "People ask really stupid questions, like 'Where does the test sock go?'" says the Leafcutter, aka John Burton, a native of Wakefield in northern England who's migrated to Hackney in East London. "It's up to you to try and find a deeper thing in it. They're usually quite dark, surreal or nonsensical, the [improvised] answers. Because the questions are usually crap. It's really scary to do it, but it makes you feel alive."

There's a modesty about Leafcutter John that's made it easy to overlook the work he's been issuing over the past three years. His opening flutter on Mike Paradinas's Planet Mu in 2000, *Concours EEP*, was a collection of ephemera originally tacked on to the end of the demos he sent the label. He followed it the next year with the more assured *Microcontact*. But a quiet determination coupled with a traumatic personal experience has led to the unleashing of *The Housebound Spirit*, a record whose sporadic dips into disconsolate song make a mockery of electronica's will to Powerbook.

"I think to base music on theory is a bit inhuman," he says, commenting on the preponderance of dogmatically produced digital sound over the past few years. "When your means of production are so ordinary as a household computer that you can write your CV on, or a letter to your landlady, that is really silly. I don't know why anybody would want to listen to that. You're not offering any part of yourself. I try emotionally to give a lot. I sent [this album] out to [various] people, and all their girlfriends nicked it. I thought, that's never happened before. That's a good sign."

Even though the themes of *The Housebound Spirit* hinge around domestic confinement, agoraphobia and its opposite, fluid laws govern the (dis)connections between tracks, which dial through Mac-processed sound shards; sculpted fragments bolted together in a way that creates the illusion of group play; acoustic minstrelsy like "Walk On My Back", "If You Have An Enemy" and "House Or A Soul" (that remind you of Neil Young or Big Star's Chris Bell); and the amazing "For Two", an anomaly for melodic and clannet that occurred when an unknown woman, a friend of a friend, turned up on Burton's doorstep one day. Discovering she was packing a woodwind piece, he put his unwired guest to work. "I'd never met her before," he says, "and we improvised together and it was really beautiful, perfect. So it can be spontaneous like that, but the rest of it takes months to put together."

In fact *The Housebound Spirit* took three years, during a time when Burton was mostly confined to barracks, hostage to a depressive illness brought on by an attempted late night mugging incident near his home. "The whole of this record's about not trusting outside," he explains, "and that's a really horrible thing to be drawn into, because I really like talking to people, like communicating. People tell me their stories, and for those two years it was really difficult to go out and meet people, meet up with friends. It's quite melancholy because I was. I was very upset."

"I developed globus hystericus," he declares, not without a certain retrospective pride at having picked up such a rare psychological condition. "It's like a huge lump in your throat. You can't eat and you can't swallow, and you feel sick, and you get this tightness of the chest, and I thought, there's definitely some sort of tumour happening there. I thought it was throat cancer, there was about three months when I was convinced I was going to die." Counselling eradicated the condition and opened up fresh creative channels; traces of the experience manifest in tracks such as "Escape From The Globus Playpen", one of the album's more frenzied cuts. "When I'd been mugged

I'd kind of cut myself off from outside, but I'd also cut myself off from my emotions, and basically the lump in the throat is the same as when you're about to cry. But it was constant, so you're in a pretty emotional state, and your body's going, 'you are emotional, you've got to let it out.' Now," he says laughing, "I'm happy to say that I'm fully rehabilitated!"

Burton came to London originally to study art. He trained as a sculptor and painter but didn't share the negative attitude towards self-expression among his more conceptually minded colleagues. He drifted towards sound, but despite a wide range of associations – unreleased recordings with Man's Robert Hampson, current work as technician for digital composer John Wall, and resident guitarist with Miami/Labellante Capitol K – his demeanor is more of an inventor. He often uses magnetic devices which interface with his computer. "They cost about three quid and they just plug into the back of a computer into a Max patch," he enthuses, "and they're beautiful little concrete tape music type compositions. I'm really into cheap stuff that everybody can use, and I like trying to make this sort of thing open to everybody."

He is an altruistic creator of software applications such as *Fool's Dicta* (for handling dictaphone samples) and *cd\_minifuck*: "It was the first thing I ever wrote, and it's kind of a mistake about glitchy CDs. You put a CD in, and it picks out random tracks, puts bits into a buffer and granularly fucks up each bit so you get this texture of all these different tracks from an album or whatever source material you put in. 2000 people downloaded it in a couple of weeks."

He plans next to make "a very academic thing", if only to confound expectations. "My goal is always that you listen to the record and you are completely somewhere else," he concludes. "But at the same time it makes you aware of you. And having set a goal like that I can never achieve it, so I can keep going for ever... There's no point in having achievable goals." □ *The Housebound Spirit* is out now on Planet Mu. Website: leafcutter.33@pm.net



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# ERIC GLICK RIEMAN

The much travelled Rhodes. By Julian Cowley

"I feel that modern electronic musicians rarely spend enough time with their instruments to develop a complex relationship with them", says Californian multi-instrumentalist and composer Eric Glick Riemann. His remarkable solo recording *Ten To The Googolplex* (Acretions) offers persuasive evidence of the complex relationship he has established with an unlikely sound source: a modified Rhodes piano. He continues: "Part of my desire to re-imagine the Rhodes electric piano comes from a wish to point out that older technologies which are considered obsolete can be just as interesting as new technologies. In addition, the prepared and extended Rhodes allows me to deconstruct the idea of 'instrument'."

Cage's example showed the way. Glick Riemann modifies the piano's interior, inserting damping agents such as rubber washers, pieces of wood, rods, springs, even figurines and finger puppets. "I strike and scrape the inside with my marbles, mallets, brushes, bones, chains, bottlecaps, my fingers; anything I find lying around that suggests possibilities," he explains. He has also added an extension board with tuned rods that he rubs with a double-bass bow. As he points out, this attachment produces sonorities reminiscent of whales or water-activated hydrophones. It features prominently on *Ten To The Googolplex*, where Glick Riemann improvises slow, haunting music that passes well beyond Ambient agreeableness to offer the more substantial satisfactions of deep listening.

"This music helps me to centre my attention in a meditative way," he says. "But I can't be completely comfortable if the possibility of breaking this format is not a constant as well. Persian composer Elanë Radigue is a major inspiration lately. She was at Mills College, Berkeley as a visiting composer when I was studying there, and I deeply love her [electronic piece] *Trilogie De La Mort*."

Riemann views Mills College as "an institutional codifier of the Bay Area's experimental tendencies". He still draws support, some of it highly practical, from the community of musicians who gravitate there. "The Mills Contemporary Performance Ensemble, of which I'm a member, has performed two of my compositions: *She Dots With Dots*, a structured improvisation based on a dada poem by Kurt Schwitters, and "Galactagogue", a piece about milk in songform with improvisations. Many of my pieces lately have been about milk! I'm currently composing a string quartet, some chamber pieces and piano pieces, working with eclectic notational forms that allow me as composer to be in a more equal relationship with the performers than is allowed by traditional notation. There is still a lot of room for exploration on the edge where open improvisation and traditional notation meet."

As a child in a musical household Glick Riemann studied classical piano and grew up listening to rock. He has subsequently played with numerous rock groups, most recently the San Francisco indie outfit Laughingstock, which he left in 2002. He recalls, "I credit my Uncle Dwight with introducing me to the blues, and hence improvisation, playing his wonderful renditions of hymn tunes and singing in his baritone growly voice. This led me to begin to experiment at the piano. I taught myself how to improvise boogie-woogie at about age 12 and I more or less quit playing classical piano for many years in my late teens and twenties, focusing on improvisation. By my early twenties, I was regaling our family reunion talent shows with greatly out of context free improvisations."

"I idolised Ornette Coleman, Terry Riley, and the New York scene," he continues, "which at that time included Fred Frith." Other favoured listening that has expanded his musical understanding includes Pauline Oliveros, The Residents, Morton Feldman, King Crimson, Oliver Messiaen, John Zorn's Naked City,

Meredith Monk, Thelonious Monk and Sun Ra. Glick Riemann's work in a collective improvisational context can be sampled from *DalabaFrithGlickRiemannKihlstedt* (Acretions), a project initiated when he suggested a collaborative recording to guitarist and Mills Professor Fred Frith. Frith agreed and proposed bringing in trumpeter Lassi Dalaba. Glick Riemann in turn proposed adding violinist Carla Kihlstedt and an unusual and highly effective quartet came into existence.

His prepared electric piano generates a refreshingly strange climate for their instrumental interaction, but it's Glick Riemann's musicianship that makes the difference more than the novelty of the treated piano's sound. At heart he's a composer and improviser, and to those ends he began modifying electric pianos. He observes, "I learned as a young classical piano student and self-taught jazz musician that my musical practice could be an unlimited source of interesting ideas and feelings. But only in a strict ratio with my time commitment to it, I practise daily and derive immense strength from this as a spiritual practice."

His ideas and feelings currently find outlets in a variety of contexts, including *Thieves Of Silence*, an electronic/environmental duo with Jeff Karsen; and *Blige Radiolana*. The latter are "a ten plus piece ensemble including percussion, guitar, bassoon, saxophones, laptop, tuba, trumpet, viola and me on various instruments, sometimes including – but not limited to – prepared Rhodes, acoustic piano, celeste, melodica, modular synthesizer, toy piano, theremin, and other keyboards". He's working at present on a second solo modified Rhodes recording. "It has more notated material on it than *Ten To The Googolplex*," he expands, "and includes several pieces using a previously unrecorded technique where I balance flat quartz screws on the resonators of the Rhodes." *Ten To The Googolplex* and *DalabaFrithGlickRiemannKihlstedt* are out now on Acretions



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## GLOBAL EAR:

# FRIOUL ISLANDS

A survey of sounds from around the planet.

This month: On an island off the coast of Marseille, Tony Harrington enters the temporary autonomous zone of Festival MIMI, which is extending its interest in art as an agent of cultural growth to Russia and Zaire

MIMI moments (clockwise from left): Tony Buck and Dave Watson; Phil Minton; MIMI organizer Ferdinand Richard

Located 30 minutes by boat off the coast of Marseille, the Frioul Islands are two sun-blasted strips of rock breaking up the deep turquoise mass of the French Mediterranean. The islands are pockmarked with ruins: crumbling pillboxes and gun emplacements built by the Nazis during World War Two; and at the landward tip of one island, the picturesquely dilapidated outhouses and mock Greek temple of the 18th century Hôpital Caroline, a former quarantine hospital built high on a promontory overlooking one of the best-for-bays strung around the island's vertiginous coastline. In recent years, this quiet, abandoned place has provided the venue for Festival MIMI, one of Europe's most utopian annual gatherings of front-rank outsider musicians.

"The island is symbolic but it's not really important," says Ferdinand Richard, the creative force behind Festival MIMI and its host organization, AMI Centre National de Développement pour les Musiques Actuelles. "What is important is that we now do it in Marseille." For the past 18 years, Richard has been programming MIMI along radically non-dominant lines: "As soon as I hear of a musician who's not respecting the rules, who's not doing what they are expected to do, then I start to get interested. That's the basic approach, the philosophy since the beginning." In past years the festival has featured Ornette Coleman, Moondog, Jim O'Rourke, Gong, and Terry Riley. This year, the line-up includes a set of post-industrial percussion rituals by Z'ev; Nirja Tune's Russian revolutionist Oj Vaden with a group featuring former Scratch Pervart First Rate; a laptop jam between two groups of French and Japanese musicians; an ad hoc trio of Sonic Youth guitarist Lee Ranaldo, drummer Tony Buck and bagpipe player Dave Watson; and a pair of rare improvising duos: Peter and Caspar Brötzmann, and vocalist Phil Minton with guitarist Luc Ex.

It's a protean line-up by any standards, but Richard is quick to put the festival in context. "We are not concert organisers," he contends. "MIMI is a modest part of AMI's budget. We work all year long in Marseille on a daily basis, in the suburbs, mostly with young people, and poor people, of course. We work on all aspects of preproduction, workshops, rehearsal studios, all these mechanisms. Everything that comes before you jump on stage or make a record is interesting to us. We also introduced this concept of 'festival atelier'—workshop festival. I am not interested in organising one more festival for tourists. I don't want this festivalisation of culture. Culture is everyday. It's a process, not just a product that you

eat and then you shit back and then you go to sleep."

Ferdinand is a musician too. In the late 70s he was a member of French avant rock unit Etron Fou Leleupian, whose Les Poumons Gonflés album has just been reissued by the Gazul label. In the early 80s he hosted a weekly radio show in the South of France playing all manner of avant garde sounds. He was soon invited to curate a festival in the region based on the music he was playing on the show, and formed AMI to produce the event. For the next decade and beyond, MIMI decamped to various locations throughout Provence before fetching up on the Frioul Islands. Now based in Marseille, AMI is a grass roots organisation with impeccable international connections, whose facilities (studios, rehearsal rooms, concert spaces) help incubate the city's young musicians (from burgeoning electroacousticians to suburban HipHop headz), as well as providing training for the next generation of France's culture workers and managers. Operating what Richard calls a "system of knowledge transfer", AMI has extended its operations to the Middle East, West Africa, Morocco and Japan, and spawned two new festivals atelers, MIMI-Sud in Kinshasa, Zaire, and MIMI-Nor in Naryan-Mar, a small oil "in" gas town in the Nenets region on Russia's isolated northern coast.

"This is our big operation now, international co-operation and development," he says. "Both MIMI-Nor and MIMI-Sud want to be workshop festivals, so I bring people who will open courses, run workshops, and then we have the festival. It reanimates some spirit in these places, it creates networks, and it's also the occasion for me to travel people, not just artists, but managers. I like this idea very much. Behind that is always the unspoken question of the role of art in society. So we listen to this music just to have fun after a hard day, or is it a constituent part of our identity? I raise this question constantly.

"I am not interested in producing art objects," he continues. "I am not interested in the production of an art, I am interested in its movement, where is he going, at which speed, where he will stop, will he start again, and in what direction. So we inject money in accelerating movement. This is symbolic for us. AMI should not be considered as an object, it is the addition of several dynamic forces that go in a direction, and this is what should animate cultural policies. The role of art in society is never static, it's always a provocation, it's always something that makes you transcend reality. And because you are forced to some extent to try and answer this question, that is brought in by art, then you grow a bit. Art is

education, it must not be predictable. And people come to MIMI because they know they are in the right place to be questioned, to be excited. They are very openminded."

It's true. By day tourists wander listlessly through the hospital's dusty courtyard, basking in the island heat. As night falls, up to 300 locals take the boat from the mainland to fill the bleachers erected in front of the open-air stage, itself built in the dramatic shadows of the hospital's ruined temple. On each of the festival's four nights, the music is preceded by a 20 minute film depicting the current Interimments de Spectacle dispute between France's arts workers and a government that wants to 'modernise' their employment contracts, while the interval between acts is given over to an audience debate conducted by some of the technicians working on the festival. "MIMI supports the legitimate struggle of the arts workers of this country," announces Richard, just in case anyone had failed to get the message. But the audience gives the unionists' cause the same attention it affords the music, whether it's the electrifying thermals of guitar and percussion held aloft by blowing pipe drones that characterises the set by the Ranaldo/Buck/ Watson trio; vocalist Phil Minton's grotesque glossoialette whirling over Luc Ex's hawfied chording; or Vaden's closing night set of domed beams, wildlife live electronics, Afrocentric platitudes and tumbling pyrotechnics.

"The benefit of MIMI is not just good concerts," says Richard, "it's all the little things we don't see that happen later. Young musicians come here, they meet people, they make a network, they go home, they have strength, they build up the next step. It's the way life is going."

For Richard, all AMI's activities are correctives to the detached, bourgeois, Western notion of art's role in society, as well as reactions to the official state culture in France, which oppresses artists by operating a top-down model of what art is or can be. Hence MIMI's migration into the unmediated temporary autonomous zones of Kinshasa and Naryan-Mar.

"In Africa, it's impossible to divide art from normal life," he says. "It's completely integrated. It's your voice. If you go to small towns in Russia, you can meet exceptional artists, they look like farmers, they look very different to what they say or what they do. They are really crazy. They go very far, they take all kinds of risks, aesthetically speaking. They are completely undisciplined, you cannot rule them. They are mad. If you want to stop them you have to kill them. I like this spirit very much." □ Thanks to Anne Ramade



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GY 413/416 GOLDEN  
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# INVISIBLE JUKEBOX:

Every month we play a musician a series of records which they are asked to identify and comment on – with no prior knowledge of what they're about to hear.

Tested by Christoph Cox. Photos by Kareem Black



# DAVID BYRNE

Born in Scotland in 1952, David Byrne was raised in Baltimore. As a teenager he played guitar and ukulele at school dances and coffee shops, and experimented with tape collages and feedback pieces. In 1970 he enrolled at Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), where he studied Bauhaus design and conceptual art. After a year he dropped out, eventually ending up busking in San Francisco.

In 1973 Byrne returned to Rhode Island. With RISD friends Chris Frantz and Tina Weymouth he formed The Artistics, who pursued conceptual projects about the intersections between art and everyday life. In 1975 he moved to New York, where he was soon joined by Weymouth and Frantz. Renaming themselves Talking Heads, and joined by former architecture student Jerry Harrison, they recorded their first LP, *Talking Heads 1977*.

A year later, Brian Eno produced their second album, *More Songs About Buildings And Food*. Over the next few years they augmented their line-up with funk and World musicians on records such as *Fear Of Music* (1979), *Remain In Light* (1980) and *Speaking In Tongues* (1983). In 1980, Byrne and Eno released *My Life In The Bush Of Ghosts*, a Fourth World mix of hypnotic grooves, Ambient electronics and vocal samples of preachers, talkshow hosts and Middle Eastern singers.

During the 80s Byrne contributed music to Twyla Tharp's dance piece *The Catherine Wheel*, and Robert Wilson's theatrical events *The CIVIL warS* and *The Forest*. With Ryuichi Sakamoto and Cong Su, Byrne composed the score to Bernardo Bertolucci's 1987 film *The Last Emperor*. In the late 80s he became an enthusiastic promoter of global musics. He started his own label, Luaka Bop, to bring Latin American pop to a wider audience. Luaka Bop also released Byrne's solo CD *Rei Momo*, where he was backed by a 15 piece New York Latin All-stars outfit. With his solo career in full swing, in 1991 Talking Heads called it quits.

Since then, Byrne has released five solo records, featuring an ever-widening cast of characters and influences; and Luaka Bop has amassed a large catalogue of pop, global and electronica releases. Byrne also regularly exhibits and publishes his photography.

This month, Thrill Jockey releases *Lead Us Not Into Temptation*, Byrne's soundtrack to the new Scottish film *Young Adam*. He also has a DVD and book project, *Envisioning Emotional Epistemological Information*, published by Steidl Verlag/Thames & Hudson (see Cross Platform). The jukebox took place in New York's East Village.

## KOMAR & MELAMID AND DAVE SOLDIER "THE MOST UNWANTED SONG"

FROM THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE MUSIC (Q&A) 1997

I'm gonna make a wild guess that it's like an audio version of Komar & Melamid's People's Choice paintings [where Russian artists Vitaly Komar and Alex Melamid produced paintings based on market research into people's tastes: see [www.idcenter.org/km](http://www.idcenter.org/km)]

That's exactly what it is.

Wow! So this puts together in one song all the musical elements people have said they don't like in music.

Right. It's 22 minutes long – because most people like shorter rather than longer songs – and a mixture of opera, rap, Country, children's and holiday songs. [Howls of laughter as the track shifts abruptly from schlock Country to operatic rap]

You're interested in conceptual art, and did some projects resembling this early on, right?

Yeah, I did something like this. I had an idea to do kind of a Nielsen rating system – like the TV rating system – for artists. Artists would find out what people wanted, and the audience would find out what makes the things they like. Everything had to be classified by style, size, colour, whether or not it was abstract, and so on – which, of course, ends up being just ridiculous. So it's kind of making fun of the whole scientific process, that whole feedback process by which television shows and other things are rated. But it's also sincerely curious about where it ends up too, about how my wants and desires work, about how I find out about the things I like. Do I find the things I like through a series of branching decisions like a computer program, or is it some other more mysterious process?

In interviews with Komar & Melamid, one says their project represents genuine popular art and the other says it reveals the absurdity of statistical polling.

Yes, Alex [Melamid] a few times, and he consistently keeps a really straight face, which makes it even funnier when he makes these incredible pronouncements. I saw him do a reading in Williamsburg [Brooklyn] about the healing powers of art. They've done installations and performances and talks based on this whole idea that art exerts a kind of positive influence on the viewer – it improves your mind and your sensitivities, etc. So, taking this one step further, they started using art as a sort of spiritual and medical aid. They classified the rooms of the Metropolitan Museum according to what bodily parts they're good for. So if you have liver ailments, you would go to the Renaissance section [laughs]. They also have pictures of themselves showing reproductions of Van Gogh paintings to rural tribespeople in Indonesia or Thailand, as if they were missionaries bringing Western spiritual medicine to the heathens [laughs].

Do you still think of yourself as a conceptual artist?

Yeah, I guess so. It doesn't happen as much musically, although once in a while it kind of works its way in there. I just did a soundtrack [for Young Adam] where some of the music was done according to a Capaian influence, where I would tell the musicians: 'Here are the notes you can play, and you can play them whenever you like.' It was basically a series of instructions and no score, and it worked out great. For certain musical cues and scenes, it was just perfect. It also surfaces in the other stuff I do, the art and photography stuff.

## VEDA BROWN "SHORT STOPPING"

FROM THE STAX RECORDS 1 (1974) 1979

Oh, I don't know who this is. I could guess. I'm forgetting her name now, the woman who sang 'Clean Up Women' [Betty Wright]. Someone from Miami or New Orleans or... someone from that era.

It's a Stax track from 1973 by Veda Brown. This kind

of 70s soul clearly influenced early Talking Heads. Wow. Oh, yeah, some of those songs were incredibly popular, but I might say, in other kinds of ways, they were really minimal, really stripped down. There was nothing there that wasn't needed. So, in a way, I could see an art aesthetic applied to genuinely popular music – the whole 'less is more' thing, that each instrument had an very integral part to play and they all had their independent space. There was this amazing little world that you could build around these pop music tracks.

Was it the minimal production that interested you in Al Green, when you covered 'Take Me To The River' on *More Songs About Buildings And Food*, or was it his peculiar combination of sexuality and spirituality?

I found that particular song to be, yeah, bizarre because of the spiritual/sexual nature. He's not alone there, but he would do it in ways where it was just really confusing. You could really sense this confusion and conflict in his mind, and in Marvin Gaye, too – the kind of sensuality and erosiveness, this drooling just that, in expression, is so close to the ecstasy that's experienced in church. He knows it. They know it. We know it. Some of the audience recognises it as having a church connection and that the two things are really close. It's almost as if, when you get to the edge of what's permissible, the rawest edge of one kind of thing, you turn the corner and you're on the other side. Do you think Talking Heads' version had that spiritual/sexual sense?

For me, it was more about the oddity of bringing Al Green into CBGBs. It becomes a way of saying, I like this. We like this kind of stuff. There's something here too to be dismissed.

## TELEVISION "MARQUEE MOON"

FROM MARQUEE MOON (ELKS HEADQUARTERS) 1997

[Immediately] This one's pretty easy. I'm not sure what song it is, but it's from Television's first record. I'd guess it's 'Marquee Moon', but I'm not sure.

You're right. Television were prominent in the late 70s CBGBs scene; and this record came out the same year as the first Talking Heads album.

Yeah, but I thought this was a much better record. Sincerely, I thought it just really captured this band. It was an unwritten rule that bands at this time shouldn't do guitar solos because of all the overindulgent guitar solos that had preceded for the last decade. But this band could get away with it. Both guys could do really inventive guitar solos that were very textured.

And the track's nine minutes long – another no-no at the time. Do you have any nostalgia for this scene?

The only thing I miss is that there was a brief period where you could try things out and either fail or succeed, and hardly anybody noticed. Or, if people did notice, they forgave you for trying something out and failing. They didn't hold it against you. In fact, it was kind of applauded. It was a brief moment for lots of these bands. After that, it became less easy to just strike out and do things and see what was going to happen. For a lot of bands and musicians, as soon as they appeared, they'd get signed up. And now, with the relative ease of making a decent-sounding record, the finished product is just thrown out there right away. There's not that gestation period.

Talking Heads first toured with The Ramones, whose aesthetic appeared to be miles away from that of yourselves or Television.

Yeah. Some of these guys [Television] were a little more prickly as personalities, so that kind of mutual toasting didn't happen. But it was a period when the audiences were open to The Ramones and Talking Heads, and it didn't matter that musicians were miles apart. They were interested in the fact that something new was going on, and they wanted to hear all the extremes of it.

**JON HASSELL**  
"COBRA MOON"  
FROM EARTHQUAKE BLAVO (TOMATO 1998)

This sounds like Jon Hassell. Is that right? I don't know which record it is.  
It's from *Ethereology Island*, one of his earliest **Fourth World** explorations, with **Nane Vasconcelos**, **Miroslav Vitous** and others. Around the same time, you took a similar turn with *My Life in The Bush of Ghosts*.  
Uh huh. Jon was almost part of that project. **Brian [Eno]** and he and I hung out a bit around that time. We'd play records for one another that we thought were interesting.

**Fourth World music treats the record as a virtual space combining sounds taken from very disparate places. Was that the idea behind *Bush of Ghosts*?**  
I guess I didn't really think of that as much. At that time, I was listening to all these field recording records and a few African pop records and other pop records from far afield, where there wasn't much information about what they were about. The French label *Ocora* kept a record out new field recordings year after year – these pristine recordings of traditional music. And I guess what interested me was the use of the music, how it was organised, how it was written or not written, or, if it was a group of players, how they structured their playing together, and whether it was used for a religious trance, entertainment, a form of storytelling, background music for theatre or whatever. I tried to use the answers to those questions to ask myself how my own music was organised, what it was for, and what place it had in our lives. I was thinking more about the social aspects of it rather than specific sounds.

**What did you know about non-Western music at the time?**

I listened to it in high school to some extent. You could borrow vinyl from the public library in the town where I lived. So I'd go check out some pop records, along with a record of gamelan, and it would be my first encounter with a completely different kind of music. This would have been the late 60s, when musical openness was very much encouraged. It was considered hip to know about all this kind of stuff. There are periods when things close down and become more confined and concentrated, and that kind of knowledge is discouraged. And at other times things open up and different influences are welcomed again.

**Where do you think we are now?**

I think they're welcomed again in certain circles. They filter in in odd ways. I find more, say, Latin music filtering in through dance music and electronic music than through songwriters or anything like that.

**FELA KUTI**  
"ZOMBIE"  
FROM ZOMBIE (MCA 1998)

It's Fela. Yeah, I haven't seen the Fela exhibition [Black President] at the New Museum [of Contemporary Art] yet, but it sounds really great. Fela was 'World Music' before it was marketed in that way.

Yeah. It sounded strange, but it also had enough elements of familiarity – like James Brown being completely taken apart and put back together with all the puzzle pieces in different places and stretched out – I mean every song is ten minutes long! What a cool thing, just to take everything apart and make a completely different groove out of it. At that time, I was also hearing other African pop music. There were these highlife bands from Ghana, electric guitar bands out of Kenya, and some of the South African music was starting to filter out. It was all pop music, recorded in recording studios. This was no longer field recording. It was like having your own musical history, music that you knew, reflected back at you through a kind of distorting mirror. And then there's the whole story about how Fela's music was the result of a trip to

Oakland, where he fell under the sway of Angela Davis and the Black Panthers. How much more contaminated can 'African' music be? It was a lesson about how we perceive 'authenticity' and the 'purity' of traditional music or music from other countries. His music has so many influences from other kinds of pop music and other kinds of politics that it's just a complete mish-mosh of all sorts of things.

**I remember a piece you wrote for New York Times called "Why I Hate World Music".**  
[Laughs] It's not that I hate the music, of course. I hate the term. It's party has to do with the 'authenticity' issue we were just talking about. As soon as you start digging into music, you find its influences go all over the place and none of it is 'pure'. Some things may have a longer history of being unchanged; but that is no reflection on their quality. Our tastes in listening to music from other countries are a reflection of our colonial attitudes. It's more a reflection of our needs and our political and cultural attitudes towards 'the Other', towards people elsewhere, than about the music that those people are making. I think about the need to romanticise other cultures, to have that music maintain a certain distance. If it's too close to our music, then it can't be kept at a distance and safely confined. If it encroaches into our world and actually runs the risk of influencing and inspiring and being relevant to our own lives, then that's too risky. It has to be kept at bay.

**How have you incorporated World Music into your own work?**  
Oh, I don't know. My attitude has been pretty careless. I do things because I like it. I'm aware that I harbour some of the same prejudices that other people harbour. I tend to have a prejudice against synthesizers in African pop groups. But why should I? I don't know. I tend to think that that's a sign that they're trying to sound too Western. Sometimes that's true but not always. It's just another instrument.

**EMILIO BARRETO**  
"ELEGIA REZO"  
FROM SAYITIMBO (JAZZ 1998)

I don't know who it is, but it sounds like batá drums – Cuban Santana drums. There are African drums that sound really similar, but my guess is, it's Cuban. Sounds like a studio recording. It could be someone here in New York, or San Francisco, or Havana.  
**You're very close. It's from a Santería ceremony led by Emilio Barreto, a Cuban-born singer who lives in Brooklyn. I know that you have an interest in ecstatic religious experiences.**

Oh yeah. It goes back to Al Green and the Baptist church. I became aware pretty early that so much of the pop music I grew up with was coming out of that kind of ecstatic religious context. All the Slav stuff, it was all coming out of that. And that was being into so much rock 'n' roll. The church stuff was being taken out of it, but the musical roots were still there. Through hearing that stuff, I became aware that there was this really close connection between the church revival service – where people would go into trances or 'got the spirit' – and a musical performance. They're both a kind of choreographed thing that's designed to take you to that state and transport you so that you lose yourself. I realised that the same thing was happening in other Afro-Atlantic cultures: in Cuba, where this kind of [religious] music was heavily influencing Afro-Cuban music and salsa; and that the whole approach to music – how the repetition and the rhythms worked, and the way that different instruments interacted – was all based on these religious rituals. The way they would transport you into another state was exactly the same way that the secular music would. The same was true in Brazil; and it just seemed to repeat itself over and over again.

So I felt a great kinship with all those religions, because the whole form and the way that the ecstasy

was achieved through music seemed so familiar. It was something that I understood through pop music. I felt this was, in some ways, socially a healthier and certainly a lot more cathartic religious experience than what I had grown up with.

**What's your religious background?**

Protestant, Methodist, that kind of thing. So, having experienced R&B and rock 'n' roll and all that, I thought, 'Oh, here's a religion that's more like that'. And there's not just one, there's a whole set of them all up and down North America and South America. **And you can dance to it.**  
Yeah, you can dance to it and that's OK.

**ARTO Lindsay**  
"MULATA FUZARQUEIRA"  
FROM MOON CHILD (BARNINO 1998)

[Listens intently, puzzled] Oh, it's Arto! I haven't heard this one.

**It's the only song on *Noon Child* in Portuguese. With DMA, Lindsay was part of the early *COBAs* scene; and like you, he had a passion for Brazilian music. Yeah, but he grew up in Pernambuco [Brazil]. He's done very well producing various artists and done great records – which is extraordinary when you think that, at least in a technical sense, Arto doesn't play anything. All right, he does play his guitar, but not in the traditional sense. I mean it's really brave. He just relies totally on his sensibility and what he hears a band or a composer doing and his reaction to it. It's not like he sits down and helps them program stuff or edit it or play keyboard parts to collaborate with them. Yet he's managed to produce records that have a certain continuity to them, not just his own but records he's produced for other people.**

**If all your global music interests, you have had the longest relationship with Brazilian music. What drew you to the region?**

I think Jon Hassell actually introduced me to it when we were hanging out in the early 80s. He was a big fan of Milton Nascimento. But I just didn't get it. To me, at that time, I just thought it sounded too operatic or too romantic, or something. And then later on, in the mid-to late 80s, I picked up some records, probably by the same guys – Milton, Caetano [Veloso], Gilberto Gil, and various people – and it just... Maybe it was the records I picked up. The production was really interesting, really innovative. Great grooves. The writing was really sophisticated. Lyrically there was a lot going on. There was all this poetry. I felt there was this incredible depth to the music, and that they were managing to create this pop music utopia, in a way. They had achieved the ideal that we were still striving for, where, occasionally, pop music could work within the song form but have almost complete freedom. They managed to do it in poetic, commentary and concrete poetry and conceptual stuff and really romantic, incredibly emotional things – all in the same format. I thought, 'This is just amazing'.

After a couple of visits to Brazil I realised that, like anywhere, it was really only a handful or a dozen artists who were doing all this [laughs]. It was not everybody. But, in a sense, the whole culture appreciated it and liked it and was proud of it. And they realised that this was one of their principal exports and that they had to guard and protect it, too.

The first time I visited I was shocked, because in Rio you couldn't hear any Brazilian music on the radio. There was one radio station that played sambas. The rest of them were playing Brazilian rock 'n' roll; or there would be another one that played just purely North American pop music. I carried a little boombox with me, and I was searching the dial and couldn't find anything. I had heard all these records. I thought, 'Where's this? What's going on? Is this all just exported and nobody listens to this here?' Over the years, that changed a little bit. I think it's less true



Head case: David Byrne

now. Now there are more rock and pop groups that incorporate their Brazilian-ness. That's kind of true the world over. More groups in various countries feel less of an urge to imitate the North American and British models, although they still listen to them.

**Of course the same thing is true in the U.S.**

It's kind of true. If you'd heard a lot of great improvised music or jazz or alternative rock or whatever and you came and wanted to hear it on the radio, you'd go, 'Where is it?'. I just heard a Brazilian group the other day with a guy named DJ Delores. They were great. It was one of the first times I've seen a laptop thing combined with live musicians that I thought really worked. They had live percussion, a guy playing fiddles, a woman playing percussion and singing – and somehow it was just enough of a mixture that it lifted it up and made the performance seem live and not like you were just listening to a preprogrammed series of loops on his laptop.

**BERNARD HERMANN  
EXCERPTS FROM TAXI DRIVER:  
A NIGHT-PIECE FOR ORCHESTRA**

FROM BERNARD HERMANN: THE FILM SCORES (SONY) 1996

Boy, I don't know. I was going to guess one of those Duke Ellington suites or something like that. But the beginning sounded more contemporary.

**It's Bernard Hermann's soundtrack for Taxi Driver.**

Dh, I've never heard it, but everybody raves about it. Wow. I went to a performance by this little orchestra Eos where they combined Bernard Hermann's Hitchcock [soundtracks] with Schoenberg. Hermann and Schoenberg both emerged at the same time and I think both of them were, in the beginning, musically similar – sort of 12-tone, maybe not all the way, but heading in that direction. And both of them emigrated to Hollywood around the same time. One, of course, did well, and the other just could not find a way in. So, at the beginning of the performance, Eos played pieces that both of them did for films, and they were really similar. You could hardly tell who composed what. Hearing the Schoenberg piece as a film score just made it a whole lot more accessible. And it certainly gives you another angle on the Bernard Hermann stuff. You go, 'Dh, now I'm hearing where all that stuff was coming from.' But Hermann was, apparently, much more pliable and collaborative. He loved the idea of somehow making stuff work in the context of the film and adapting his style to fit, whereas Schoenberg was, 'I'm a great composer...'

**On a mission!**

'On a mission to get my music into your movie.' And that just doesn't work.

**You've written soundtracks and scored dance and theatre performances. How do you compose for film?**

I've done it a couple of different ways. I would say that the most successful for me is either reading the script or looking at the rushes and just ignoring the film and writing stuff that was evoked by the film or the script or the book or whatever, just hoping that it captures the mood and that the director likes it. Sometimes I'll tweak it a little bit to make it fit a scene. But I find that if I'm really writing with the picture going on video, it doesn't hold up quite as much. I'd heard that Ennio Morricone and Nino Rota sometimes wrote stuff before the films were shot. They maybe read the story and thought, 'OK, I'll make the mood that supports this.'

From time to time, I like the idea of being somewhat subservient to someone else's vision. You've got to assume that if they called you, they want something from you. They don't just want you to do what they tell you, but... it's fun to be given an assignment, like a puzzle-solving thing: here are your parameters. But you've also got to do something that you believe in. And it also has to serve a purpose. □ Thanks to Sue Garner, Matt Kretling and Pablo Yglesias

# INSTANT CONVERSION

Kaffe Matthews is one of the most enduring figures in London's improvised music scene, and her recent conversion from processed violin to software-based transformations of space has opened up her music to a multitude of contexts, including radio art, a sonic armchair and music for astronauts.

Words: Will Montgomery. Photos: Frank Bauer





There's a ringing in the air of Bethnal Green one Saturday afternoon in East London. I wander around the streets for a little while with earphones in and the radio on. Then I sit on a bench on a spot of public land, a sculpted grassy hump, its glass-strewn tansure ringed with trees. It's outside a former Victorian dispensary, now flats. The ancient Pellicci's cafe, part of the local Kray-crim heritage, is just across the road, as is a busy-looking pawnshop and more newly established san outlets. The ringing is in my head: Bow Bells, not Bow Bells. It's a radio artwork and it's being broadcast on Radio Cycle, a short-licence radio project run by Kalfie Matthews, best known as a first-wave laptop improviser. The piece (by Keith de Mendonça of the Disembodied Art Gallery) uses only bicycle bells as source sounds but they're processed into sharp tones and drones and they make a subtly active backdrop to the wren publicworks optimism of the open space I find myself in.

Since the appearance of Resonance FM, with its all-points experimentalism, London avant heads have been able to turn on the radio without fear. Radio Cycle is a rather different project, a meeting point between sound art, music and community activism. The station had a week-long licence, broadcasting within a one and a half mile radius of Matthews's Annette Works studio, high in a 1950s factory building by Regent's Canal in Hackney. When we meet there the following week, on a rainy summer morning, the radio transmitter is still rigged up. It's a roomy space. There are a couple of laptops, a mixing desk, a bed, racks of CDs. I sit in a large armchair that, I later learn, contains several loudspeakers and is part of Matthews's sonic furniture project. Although she tells me she's worn out from a week of 24-hour broadcasting, you wouldn't guess it: she's direct, articulate and humorous, ready to pursue aspects of any of her projects into animated discussions.

Growing out of a week of workshops in Bow, Radio Cycle's highlight was a series of pieces that were broadcast and 'played' by a group of cyclists carrying radios and following predetermined routes in the area. Citizens out and about in London Fields, Victoria Park and streets in the vicinity would encounter these mobile soundworks as they drifted by on wheels. The local streetmaps, Matthews explains, took on the character of scores for her.

"It suddenly dawned on me that the radio itself is like a mobile stage," she tells me. "Originally I wanted to have a mobile radio station but we couldn't do that because you're not allowed to have a licence and be mobile. Radio Cycle was about this invisible activity: this subtle alteration of what's going on around you. Which explains the bicycle. You'd be walking down the street and a bicycle goes by. You probably wouldn't notice the bicycle but you'd notice some sound. A piece of music floating by. Just subtle little tweaks, altering people's environment to turn them on to what they're hearing."

Matthews has had a working base in North East London since the mid-90s: first Stoke Newington, then near Brick Lane and now Hackney. One of the main aims of the Radio Cycle project, she says, was, after many years of touring and involvement in online communities, to work more closely with local people. Another such local initiative has seen her going into two Hackney girls' schools, introducing them to working with sound.

The 'weaving' of East London streets through sound is, like most of Matthews's work, an exercise in the traffic between systems, in this case radio art and the urban environment. This characteristic of her work is reflected in her self-assigned job descriptions: 'live converter'. When she first began playing regularly in

London in the mid-90s she was converting her own violin sounds and ambient material sourced from the venue into rich and dense pieces of music that rapidly reached a critical pitch of complexity. Since then she's moved through an astonishing array of activities that shows no sign of narrowing: installations, the sideline in sonic furniture, radio and Web based art, and collaborative musical work such as her involvement in Mimeo (Music In Movement Orchestra), Keith Rowe's live laptop ensemble. Matthews is directing Mimeo's performance at London's Serpentine Gallery in September – their first UK appearance.

"Music for me has always involved other media," she says. "A couple of years ago I was talking to a funder from the visual arts world about Mimeo and I realised that at last they were starting to understand music that was not about tunes. They were suddenly realising that electronic improvised music was speaking in the language that they spoke in – that it involved texture, density, colour, grain, size and shape."

During our conversation Matthews frequently returns to her interest in the physicality of sound (hence, for example, her forthcoming *Sonic Bed*, which will incorporate input from a neurophysiologist). Her live performances bring to the fore the plasticity of her raw materials, as she rapidly moulds narratives out of the conversion of sonic events. It comes as a surprise, then, to learn that, after years of incessant touring, she reached a point last year when she was on the verge of giving up performing, the heart of her work. What happened instead, after a spot of intensive labour in the studio, was a new shift in the sound components of her work. This change is evidenced on her strongest CD to date, this summer's double set *Double Bed + R*.

Like all her albums, it's composed of material drawn from live performances, only this time she's taken a much freer attitude, superimposing music recorded at different shows (in the past there was little or no editing). What's most impressive about it are the sounds themselves. She's arrived at a more spacious, stripped-down aesthetic, built on sine tones generated by a mini-theremin. The work moves through subtly overlapping loops and it has a remarkable warmth to it. Rather than the more elaborate edifices of her older work, there's a new confidence in the capacity of her sounds to stand alone. Lines of sound move in gradual evolutions that draw the listener along with them. In taking this minimal turn Matthews is, of course, moving in parallel with a number of other currents in avant-garde music – seen in the work of collaborators such as Sachiko M and Andrea Neumann, for example. Yet the rhythmic richness of the music has clear continuities with the more layered pieces she has made in the past. It goes back, it seems, to a trip she took to West Africa in 1986.

"The most important part of my musical life, when I reached a moment of clarity and knew that music was the thing that I needed to do," she says, "was when I came home from living in Senegal for three months and working with drummers on the beach. There I was taught about the importance of the texture of your skin, its temperature and its shape on the drum skin. And about the temperature of that drum skin and the shape of the drum, and the weight and dryness of the wood. All those details make up a sound and each alteration of those ingredients will change the sound. Changing those sounds will change the music and its meaning. And I learnt about how to put together ones and twos and threes in patterns and about how they can then shift."

These two notions – the importance of small changes and the use of overlapping patterns – reappear in different guises throughout Matthews's musical career. From 1997's *cd Ann wonders*, there

has been a fascination with the ways that layers of loops interact with one another. Incidentally – the introduction of sound mixed from a nearby bar, for example – could be intended to reinforce the specificity of the particular event and to change the music in a way that was only possible in that space. Although these days Matthews is less concerned with making her listeners aware of her working methods, the emphasis on unrepeatable material remains.

"I'm responding to the resonance and the energy of a space," she remarks. "That feeds the music and partially creates the music. It's not about the piece itself. If I was playing here on a Thursday afternoon and it was pouring with rain the acoustic would be very different and therefore so would the ways that I would move it. It's all in the details. The tiny shifts of information are really crucial to creating the music. So the actual place itself doesn't matter. It's just the fact that there will be a different resonance and energy that will create and colour the music in different ways. And of course the size and energy of the audience has a huge amount to do with that."

After several years of arduous work with a MIDI violin, samplers and effects in the early 1990s, the breakthrough for Matthews was her discovery of Stein's ULSa software in January 1996. Whereas in the past she had been preoccupied with methods of controlling the technology she was using, ULSa allowed the machine space to speak. She learnt to set up particular environments on the laptop that would define the parameters of its responses without making them predictable: chance and the precursiveness of real-time performance could be preserved in her interactions with the software. Things moved very quickly and within a matter of weeks she was doing regular gigs with the new set-up and a laptop. The following year she released *cd Ann*, a remarkable series of violin-sourced electronic improvisations that documents the richness of those early adventures with ULSa.

In those days Matthews was ardent about process. It was vital for her to communicate the fact that the music was, in the words of a CD sleevelet, "a real-time exploration of electronics in a particular place at a particular time". More recently, however, there's been a shift away from this concern and a greater reliance on the qualities of the sounds themselves. The movement from process to sound is caught in 2000's *translucent cd*, which contained her farewell to the violin, "the last of the violins". It was a mix of *cd + fo*, however, that she has attained a new stage. Much had clearly happened in the period between *cd + cd* and *cd + fo* – Matthews and the violin, after all, went back a long way; she first played it at the age of seven).

"That gap has been about leaving the violin behind," she explains. "It's been about finding where I am next and going through a big change. I had a few difficult times happen. I was in New York for 9/11 and I saw it happen. It took me a year to deal with that. I think for a lot of people it was a shattering experience. I was also performing so much that I was not having enough downtime in my studio. To actually go through the shift musically I needed time to make a solid."

Her new music is more focused on the possibilities of space. Matthews has been using eight channels to get beyond stereo sound, and she's become more interested in the "architectural" placement of sound within the performance space. Although many of the musical lines and what she calls "droplets" of sound are very simple, their positioning has become a key part of the performance. On *cd + fo* too, the stereo image is carefully shaped. Some of the old love for rough textures is there in the glitchiness of some of the loops but the most striking element of the sound is the use of very clean electronic tones.

"The same tone, that really completely pure sound, is something I've loved as a sound source ever since I first switched on an Akai S900 sampler," she says. "Even though it's the antithesis of the violin, it's this smooth sound, with no edges and no vibration. The violin is all about a vibrating edge. I'd been wanting to clear things out, make some space and deal with things on a much simpler level. That's really what the use of the theremin has been about."

Matthews's solo work often seems to involve a negotiation with control: the coexistence of her own ideas alongside the contributions of the machine and an openness to the accidentals of live performance. In her collaborations, however, Matthews explores a different side of her aesthetic. "Essentially, the collaborations I do are very much about making me work in ways that I wouldn't on my own," she tells me. In one recent piece, for example, she made a "collaborator" of the weather. *Weather Made*, a project involving artists, kite fliers and writers, took place on an uninhabited Scottish island. Matthews used data from the kite strings, along with the temperature, light and wind, to control various software parameters: pitch, loop duration, filters and panning (the results are documented on an Annette Works CD-R).

"Why I find the weather to be an ideal collaborator is that it's a system that's outside my control," she explains. "One thing about my early work with technology and the violin and so on, I realise now, was that it was about me controlling everything. Then working with ULSa was about setting it up so it can do its own thing, which I then dealt with. Now the weather is completely outside that because it is its own system. It works in patterns but these patterns never repeat. I set up ULSa so the weather would do what I would normally do – my job was just to prepare an instrument for the weather to play."

It was after this experience that Matthews went out to the Australian outback to work with Alan Lamb, whose monumental recordings of miked-up telegraph wires (such as 1995's *Primal Image*) had made an enormous impression on her. "When I first heard his music I thought this is the music: I don't need to make music any more, this is it," she says. She was fascinated, she tells me, with their similarities and differences as string players. Her aim is to perform live with Lamb in the bush, and uplink the music via satellite to live sound systems at venues in cities worldwide. Another collaboration, which has resulted in an interactive Website and which will see the release of a DVD in November, is her *Weightless Animals* project with harpist Zoëna Perkins and artist Mandi McIntosh. The work aims to reflect on both the strangeness and the attractions of travel in space. For Matthews the project is part of her current exploration of the medium of radio and is thus linked to the more earthbound ambitions of *Radio Cycle*. Her contributions to *Weightless Animals* incorporate radio translations of the electronic activity in space, along with recordings of dialogue between ground crew and astronauts, and of the music that the astronauts choose to hear in space.

During a research trip to the NASA HQ in Houston, Texas, Matthews and McIntosh interviewed several astronauts. "In the old days the astronauts were allowed to take six cassettes each. I was actually given the six cassettes that the astronaut took into space. We've processed one of those. One of the questions we asked the ex-astronauts was 'What is the piece of music that you most associate with space?' Most of them would just want [mimics astronaut draw]. Some nice classical, a bit of folk, some Easy Listening." But one of them looked me straight in the eye and said, "Ravel's *Piano Concerto For The Left Hand*. That's the one, that's it." So I got a recording of that and

processed it and made a piece out of it."

The lappettes, a group of female laptop artists now in its third incarnation (floating Anyte Greve-Fuchs and Ryoko Kawajima), is another of Matthews' joint ventures. The group initially grew out of an event Matthews curated at New York's Tonic, during which she played alongside Perkins, Blue Mon, Marina Rosenfeld and obliast – the five musicians enjoyed the event so much that they went on to set up the lappettes. In its latest version Matthews says it has grown into an experiment with networked computers: "I think that there's a mammoth world of music that hasn't been discovered yet that could be composed via us actually plugging our machines into each other and controlling each other's sound," she observes. "You experiment with controlling each other's sounds. So it's about thinking of sound as a central musing pot that we all have access to. It throws up all kinds of ideas of ownership and control."

These days a Kaffe Matthews solo performance is an atmospheric event. She's dispensed with the stage, preferring to sit in the centre of the space. The lights are off and only a little lamp illuminates the laptop, spilling onto Matthews's intent features. She believes that a more valuable listening experience is made possible with the minimum of visual distractions.

"These days I'm getting to a venue quite a bit before the gig," she remarks. "I place mics to be able to work with little bits of feedback. I'm resampling what I'm doing within the space much more. A stage is not relevant to me. I need to be in the middle of the space so I can hear how the sound works with a quadraphonic system. Working with the sonic aesthetic I have now, your actual position in relation to those speakers is more important. When you're working with smooth tones and space and so on it really creates another kind of music, depending on your position as a listener. I want the people to be close because the hotspot of the sound is going to be where I am, in the middle, and they need to be there too. I need a little light so I can see what I'm doing but essentially it's dark and people are in the position of just dealing with the sound. That's what music is about for me – it's about listening, active listening."

It's possible to draw parallels between some of the sounds that Matthews is working with and those used by musicians such as Ryoko Ikeda, Carsten Nicolai or Sachiko M. But the structure and organisation of the music is very different – the way that a piece develops as an internal coherence is quite specific to Matthews's manner of working with rhythm and timbre. And, alongside the sine tones, she retains an attachment to very distinctive sharp edged tones. She returns to a spatialised, visual vocabulary to describe it.

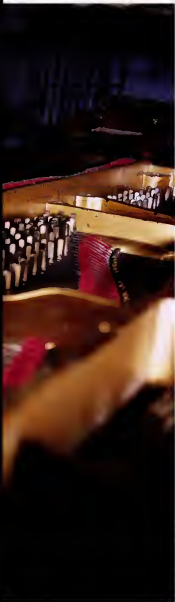
"It's the actual sound and the sense of shape about each sound that is clear, like little sculptured moments in air. I think I've wanted to let the air have a bit of space in what I do rather than have to stuff it full of sound all the time. One of the reasons I've come to this much more minimal music is that I don't feel the need to blast music at people any more. I think some of what I was doing, working with high levels of sound, with great density and complexity, could feel bombastic, a bit of an assault. Now I don't feel the need to do that. This music is small but there are little jewels." □ *cd + fo + fo* and the *Weather Made* CD-R are available at [www.annetteworks.com](http://www.annetteworks.com). For info on the *Weightless Animals* project: [www.hamandsons.com](http://www.hamandsons.com). *Mimeo* on play in the Pavilion at London's Serpentine Gallery on 5 September. Field 61, a radio show on digital music presented with its Garrels, broadcasts every other month on Resonance 104.4 FM (Friday 9:30-10:30pm). *Radio Cycle* will be repeated on Resonance 104.4FM ([www.resonancefm.com](http://www.resonancefm.com)) in the near future





# IVORY POWER

Born of Russian Jewish immigrant parents, New York pianist Boris Bergman was already in his forties when he first developed the "purposeful awkwardness" through which he continues to subvert conventional jazz pianism. Since then, the 76-year-old's uncompromising approach has won him such distinguished sparring partners as Evan Parker, Lol Coxhill and Oliver Lake, while Tzadik label boss John Zorn has encouraged his more meditative side. Words: Andy Hamilton. Photos: Kareem Black



"It's life or death now," asserts Boris Bergman. "There's no fooling around. Some incredible things are happening with my playing – I expect my best stuff to be coming up now in the next few months." Feeling the chill of mortality, the uncompromising improv pianist is producing some of the most exciting music of his career. Following several long distance phone calls to New York, I finally met him at a rare UK gig in the unlikely venue of a piano showroom in backstreet Leeds, where he was partnered by saxophonist Lol Coxhill and drummer Paul Hession. Seeing Bergman live is an amazing experience – crouched spider-like over the keyboard, he aims for complete independence of the hands, often crossing them over for extended periods. This "purposeful awkwardness", as he calls it, subverts traditional pianism with its conventional roles for left and right hands, and helps to make him such an individual improviser. "I've been doing these fingerings for years," he explains, "but now I can really do them in performance, it's a whole different game. Purposeful awkwardness generates ideas, there's no doubt about it... The most important thing is having a method. I was a moderately talented person, but very inventive. As long as you stick to a method, it'll work out – if you live long enough."

In conversation Bergman is by turns enigmatic, evasive, antagonistic, manic, embittered and charming. When he gets excited, it's like a stream of consciousness conveying the urgency of his desire to communicate. Yet his individual comments are lucid and articulate, and offer striking insights into the music. No one can accuse him of doubting his own abilities. "In the last ten years I've done 20 CDs, and I think that I'm a pretty good player now," Bergman confides. "You get to a certain point in your development when you know you're good. You just know. I like to drive the piano. I'm not being egotistical, but my first playing – I never heard anybody do that solo. First of all the style's my own. If they want to keep me out they'll say I play like Cecil Taylor, but I don't play like Cecil. Yet there has possibly been an unconscious conspiracy to keep me out – people aren't knocking my door down." A lack of recognition might fire his conversation, but rather than a jazz world conspiring against him, it could just be that his music is a tough listen. "I know I am not always the easiest person to work with," he admits.

One of the most extraordinary facts about Bergman is that he didn't make his 1975 recording debut, *Discovery* (Chiaroscuro), until his late forties. Though his "missing decades" evidently trouble him, his first response to questions about them is "I think it better to keep it a 'mystery' rather than put in unknowns for the 50s and 60s". That the date of his birth is also a matter of dispute further clouds his past.

Boris Bergman was born in Brooklyn, New York, on 13 December 1926 – not 1933, as is commonly reported. He took piano lessons as a boy before switching to clarinet, which he played for several years. "I wasn't playing a lot of jazz," he recalls, "more classical things. But I used to fool around. Then when I was 18 or 19 I went into the army. I was stationed in Germany just after the Second World War, 1945-46. They put me in a band, not at my own request, but they saw on my record card that I was a musician. We played everything."

"When I came back I decided to go to college," Bergman continues. "My father was a dentist, so I figured I'd try pre-dental. I floated around college and became interested in writing. I took a job on a newspaper, but decided I needed some bread, so I

took a masters in English. My father died suddenly when I was 23 – which must have had a supreme effect on me – and I became more impetuous and decided to actually study piano. I remembered certain things from childhood. I could play some blues and free stuff, pretty primitive. I started a course in the Schilling System of Composition at New York University. Then I became a high school teacher, this was in the 50s. I'm 76 years old you know, this is a very touchy thing for me. How I got to be 76, I'll never know! I used to take a lot. I took off seven years because I thought they owed me seven years. Then I started to believe it. But instead of getting weaker mentally and physically, I seem to be getting stronger."

Certainly Bergman has the energy of a much younger man. "Social forces have been a big influence on my music," he asserts. "My formative years were the 30s and 40s. As Russian Jewish immigrants it was natural for my parents to be on the left – people's rights and freedom from oppression was a consuming drive. At first I wanted to be a writer, not a musician. But I decided that playing the piano required less truth than putting it into words. If I didn't like something I could 'play' it, but to write about it – your father, your mother, your personal problems – it's much easier to play it."

His influences include jazz pianists such as Earl Hines, Lennie Tristano, Bud Powell and Thelonious Monk – not his slightly younger contemporary Cecil Taylor, with whom he's often compared. But most important were the horn players. "Bud Powell was influenced by the horn-like styles," Bergman explains. "Earl Hines was influenced by Louis Armstrong. You'll notice I have horn-like phrasing. I got that from Charlie Parker, Ornette Coleman... I heard Coleman Hawkins' "Crazy Rhythm", and I knew then that swing was the way to go. That was one of the reasons I started playing with the left hand, because the sound in the bass is closer to the saxophone."

"I come from a Tristano teaching tradition," he continues. "I took some lessons from a disciple of his, Gerry Hurd. I also took a few lessons with [Swing Era pianist] Teddy Wilson, a terrific person. My favourite pianist from that period would be Bud Powell, of course. But Tristano had a wonderful teaching method... I used to sing those [bebop] solos from records. That's what Tristano made his students do."

Like his hero Bud Powell, Bergman at first played bebop. But he was determined to forge a new style. "I knew there was no point in sounding almost as good as Bud Powell," he declares. "When I first heard Ornette Coleman and Don Cherry in a record store, I felt that this was some of the sanest music I had heard in a long time." He has said that his aim was to play John Coltrane with one hand and Ornette Coleman with the other.

Bergman played in and around New York, including solo gigs at Seven Hills and Music Inn in Tanglewood MA during the 1950s. In the 60s, while teaching music in grade (elementary) school, he fulfilled summer dates upstate and in New Jersey with drummers such as Tom Price – who recorded for ESP with Perry Robinson and Henry Grimes – and Horace (sic) Arnold. Throughout this period, his music for public consumption was more mainstream than the high energy style he was painstakingly developing in private. In the 70s he visited Europe. Then he finally made the recordings for Hank O'Neal at Chiaroscuro. "It was a Cleveland campaign," Bergman points out. "Earl Hines recorded for them. He left some of his energy in the piano."

Bergman is not the only artist to leave things late.

Other Johnny-come-late-lies to recording include Joe Maneri and Kidd Jordan. When I ask him at what point he became a full-time musician, however, Bergman questions the very concept. "Full-time musician" can be a 'romantic' term," he scoffs. "[In the 60s and 70s] I was teaching music in schools and playing solo. Isn't that a full-time musician? Composers have to teach, except possibly a dozen or so in the world, and I don't mean those who do pop music or write commercially for film or theatre. In Britain, I redise a basic insecurity about what is taken for granted in the USA. Everything has to be explained and 'proven' in terms of a career in the 'jazz, etcetera' music scene."

Away from the public gaze Bergman was developing the ambidextrous concept of "ambidexterity" as a key element of his purposeful awkwardness. For some time, he composed and improvised entirely for the left hand. "I really developed it, it's almost as good as my right, maybe better," he boasts, "so I can play a lot of polyphony without losing the swing. When I was about 19, I had this dream of a boy reaching for a star with his left hand." He was very influenced by pianist Paul Wittgenstein, for whom Ravel wrote his *Piano Concerto For The Left Hand*. And he also credits his parents' lifelong influence as another reason for his even-handed take on music. The pianist practises obsessively – the opposite of Paul Bley, who claims he doesn't practise at all. "Well, first of all Bley's style is very sparse," Bergman retorts. "He may have practised at one time. I'm not sure I believe he doesn't practise. He may get away with it but as for myself... it depends on how you play the piano. He has certain ideas he wants to use, he doesn't have to work hard, maybe he doesn't want to go any further. For me, to develop the left hand was not a simple matter... Teddy Wilson told me not to practise more than three hours a day." Does he exceed that? "You bet," he fires back. "Sometimes I practise lying down. I have one of these little pianos, a clavichord, I cut it down. I can walk around practising in the park." Indeed, in Leeds he carried a shoulder bag containing a cut-down dummy keyboard.

Classical pianists practise holding down one note while playing others, applying strength through the fingers not the arm. But Bergman has made a melodic and compositional device of this exercise. "I thought who isn't improvise doing that?" he argues. "So I'd hold the third finger down while improvising with the others. It sets a limit – you can't go too many places. You don't have to play the note, you can depress it silently... You get these circular phrases almost automatically, creating a web-like feeling in my playing when I play fast." Now he plays holding the thumb down too – all in the interests of purposeful awkwardness.

Before the 90s, Bergman always recorded solo. He began recording more frequently when he turned to the duo or trio format, amassing 24 albums in the last decade, none of them deploying the conventional jazz line-up of piano, bass and drums. "I did a number of duos," Bergman recounts, "with Evan Parker, Oliver Lake. The record with Oliver Lake, for some reason, people liked. Evan's an interesting guy. That record – it was from 1990 – I made in my apartment. I'm pushing him around on purpose. Not to insult him in any way. Evan likes jazz, no doubt about it. If he hears Danah Washington, he'll pass out on the chair."

In Leeds Bergman worked very effectively with Lol Coxhill, who like himself comes from the bebop generation. He has recorded two duo albums with Roscoe Mitchell. "He was a difficult guy to deal with, but we had our ups and downs," he lets slip. But then Bergman thrives on antagonism, provoking and

needing his partners, while connecting best with drummers, and passionate saxophonists such as Lake and Thomas Chapin. But even in company he is essentially a solo pianist.

The frequent comparisons with his better known contemporary Cecil Taylor clearly rankles Bergman, who goes to some length to put some distance between their respective styles. Both are high energy crusaders and technically abundant – and they're essentially solo players who tend not to ask up ideas from their partners. But still they're poles apart. Concerned with flexibility, extension, gracefulness, Taylor's pianism is more traditional than Bergman's counterintuitive concept, which aims to short-circuit muscular memory. They cite bebop master Bud Powell's intense, driven ferocity. But Taylor's rhythmic sense comes more from Ellington and Monk, as well as classical styles especially Bartók and Stravinsky. In Bergman's case, Ornette Coleman and John Coltrane have been stronger influences, though he never played with either. "Ornette and Cecil don't have much in common rhythmically at all," Bergman notes. "And while even now I'm thinking [chord] changes a lot, Cecil is monochromatic, he doesn't move much around in harmony. He's the only pianist who could get away with what he does. He phrases on the beat, he doesn't syncope, he doesn't use accents. I'm not sure he swings at all, after his early days. Maybe he swings in his own way. But who cares whether he swings or not, if he's got something that's his own."

"People say I've been influenced by Taylor but I don't think so," reiterates Bergman. "But I can say that there is that thing in my playing that comes from a similar approach to learning how to play. Because I learned late, and I used to try to play faster than Bud Powell. Cecil's playing didn't influence me but his presence did – because he was doing his own thing and saying, fuck you, if you don't like it, shove it! I think [saxophonist] Jimmy Lyons had a strong influence on Cecil, because his earlier playing with Steve Lacy was quite different. His real voice appeared from the late 60s, and it's very European. When you hear Cecil, you hear the phrase before he plays it and Germans like that."

The Chicago musicians, the ones who played with Roscoe Mitchell, are also very European-oriented," he continues. "That doesn't mean they're not playing jazz or the blues, but their phrasing is distorted – that comes from Stockhausen and others. And Chicago is the free music capital of America." Another European-oriented player, he argues, is Anthony Braxton, with whom he recorded in 1997. "Braxton could be a fabulous pianist," he claims. "No one else thinks so, but if he had three or four years to work at it, I reckon he would be one of the greats. There's no tone on the piano – and that's what people get after him for. Braxton has got a lot of classical stuff in his playing [Bergman sings an atonal-sounding phrase]. The same with the English free improvisers. Incidentally I would never consider Bill Evans as having a classical touch – it was his own touch, good for the music he wanted to play."

References to Stockhausen, Xenakis, Boulez, Cage and Nancarrow popper Bergman's conversation. He worked with Belgian avant garde composer Henri Pousseur in the mid-80s, and has made a recording of John Cage's piano music. "I used to practise singing along with Stockhausen's music and keeping the afterbeat with my fingers, making it swing," Bergman explains. "Not that I use those phrases any more. In my fast playing, you hear the buoyancy, and people

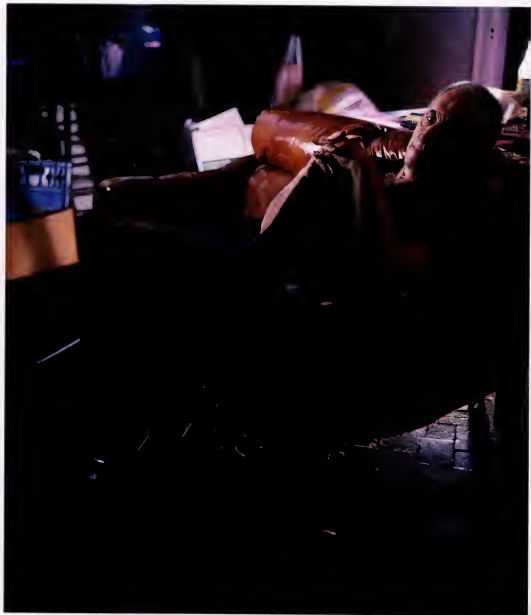
would say, Nancarrow! But I was doing that before I heard Conlon Nancarrow, and he got it from the same place as me, pre-1940 Chicago jazz."

Bergman brides when I describe him as a free player. "I'm not a free player!" he contests. "Is Sam Rivers a free player? Was Coltrane a free player? I know the harmonic changes. You want 'Sweet Lorraine' or any of those tunes, I'll do it. But I figured I wanted to make my own changes, my own harmonies. The free era was not good for pianists. You can't carry a piano around into some little club that doesn't have one – and there were no pianos. Now they're coming back a little bit. I have played electric organ and stuff like that in the 70s. But I stopped. There's something about the piano as a physical instrument."

Whatever you make of the 'free' label, Borah Bergman is no longer the wild man of free jazz piano. "This gene inside me that pushes me to these tempos and wild ideas, I'm not sure about it," he says uncertainly. His new *Tzadik* disc *Meditations For Piano* showcases Bergman in reflective mood, a side he's shown incompletely in the past. "John [Zorn] would call, 'Play slow', from the control room," he recalls. "At one time I remember him saying, 'Play slow for 20 minutes!' I also did uttempo but John decided to just use the slow stuff." Zorn wants his musicians to explore the Jewish heritage they may have neglected or denied, but Bergman's never far from the surface. The Jewish-inflected falling figures that open *Upside Down Visions* are a haunting Bergman trademark, repeated between the densely note-packed improvisations. The same plangency is found in *Meditations For Piano*, dedicated to his grandfather, Cantor Joseph Meir Pergamenschik. This is music by someone who has had great sadness in their life, but instead of casting out the "rocks", as he puts it, Bergman has moulded them to his own purposes.

"John does more composing now, what he considers as 'serious'," Bergman adds. "He says, 'Borah, I don't have too much time now [for playing], I'm composing' – with a capital C." Bergman is a little sceptical about this priority. "Now I'm not being egotistical, but if I wanted to write a string quartet I could do so. It's no big deal once you know harmonies, theory, the instruments. I've written a lot of tunes and heads, and I'd like to write. But I don't think there are composers any greater than John Coltrane."

As if making up for the missing years, Bergman is a more prolific recording artist today. A duo with the late Thomas Chapin is forthcoming on Boxholder. "He was in chemotherapy when we did it. I hear a certain desperation in his playing," Bergman comments. Future projects include a duo with Norwegian alto saxophonist Frode Gjerstad, and a tribute to Lemmy Tristano. But no matter how many discs he releases, the inherent difficulty of Bergman's music will always limit its appeal, however much he rails against this. "You said my music was difficult but why shouldn't it be difficult?" he argues. "That's one of the problems with the scene. I'm not trying to be difficult, and I can be very simple. But the music isn't really taken seriously. It has to be easy. After a hard day's work you come home, you don't want more problems. There are people who ignore me, because I don't fit the demographics, and I don't hang out, and I don't make the polls. But there are people who do know of me. And now I'm in a different situation. I mean I'm good. I'm not being egotistical. I'm not saying I'm a genius but I've really developed." □ *Meditations For Piano* is out now on Tzadik. Thanks to Giles Quinell, Bill Shoemaker, Brian Coleman and Paul Hession



Although he's been a globally renowned artist for two decades, Mike Kelley's parallel career in music and sound art is a story rarely told. It is a tale that begins in Detroit with the post-Stooges punk noise insurgency of Destroy All Monsters, and winds up in Los Angeles via conceptual rock mylmmaking with Tony Oursler in The Poetics, and collaborations with Sonic Youth, Scanner and Jean Baudrillard.

Words: Edwin Pouncey. Photos: Robert Gallagher

# ANTI- CONSO





# -ROCK ORTIUM

"This is the Annex part of Compound Annex," deadpan artist Mike Kelley, as he leads me from the main part of his Los Angeles home (or the "Compound", as he jokingly calls it) into a separate building outside. Inside this storage space and recording studio, boxes of CDs, mostly on his Compound Annex label, are neatly stacked and shelved. "It's just a way to put out my stuff," he draws, somewhat discouragingly, when asked about the function of the label, "but nobody's interested in distributing it. I've got to figure out the distribution problem because I'm sitting on boxes and boxes of CDs with no way to get them out." He pulls open a carton and starts pulling out discs by Destroy All Monsters and The Poetics, two of the art groups he was instrumental in forming during the 70s, as he tells me about some of his label's planned releases. These include Kelley's 80s improvised rock workouts, archival recordings of sound sculptures, performances with artist drone outfit Extended Organ, and ex-Bongwater vocalist Ann Magnusson's group Supersession, in which he drums. He also has plans to round up Destroy All Monsters one more time to record their long awaited studio debut. In an adjoining room converted into a recording studio, more boxes of records are stacked around the walls. These, however, are not Compound Annex stock but raw sound material for his latest musical project. Flipping back a cardboard flap, he reveals dozens of organ related albums that range from Baroque music and synrup James Last-style soap opera soundtracks to doom laden early 70s psychedelic and Progressive rock digests.

"For the last couple of years I've been buying these organ records from thrift stores and now I have hundreds of them," he explains. "I'm going through them all and pulling sections out which I'll use to compose this long piece for two organists."

The planned two hour composition will be premiered later this year in Cologne cathedral as part of a paganent. Kelley reveals, adding that the project has refined his interest in making music solo.

"Once I started listening to the records I collected, I got really excited by them," he enthuses. "My initial interest in music, even in psychedelia, came by listening to the organ. This was probably through being raised as a Catholic and having to listen to that dreary organ music all the time. It's really out of favour as an instrument right now, but I love all of those morose sounding 60s organ bands like The Zombies, Procol Harum and Vanilla Fudge. I've always liked that sound."

Although Mike Kelley has responded to music's gravitational pull since his teenage years in Detroit during the heady psychedelic days of the 1960s, it was in the world of fine art where he would fix his indelible mark. Since his beginnings as a pimply art student – as self-portrayed on the cover he designed for Sonic Youth's *Dirty LP* – he has received several prominent awards, and today his art is displayed in public and private collections all over the world. The huge body of work that he has produced since graduating from the California Institute of the Arts in 1978 travels deep into the cultural and social psyche of Western civilization that takes the form of numerous paintings, sculptures, installations, performance and video pieces. His artwork is characterised by a caustic Duchampian wit, a scalpel sharp attention to junk

detail and a finely tuned sense of esoteric history. But Kelley's equally important role as a musician and sound manipulator remains virtually undocumented. This, he feels, is partly due to the wide division that continues to exist between the art market and the independent music scene.

Eager to focus on his musical career and explain how he incorporates this into his art, Kelley begins by talking about his early rock memories, as he attempted to reach beyond the regular radio output of The Beatles, Beach Boys and Motown.

"I wasn't particularly interested in that," he grimaces, "apart from the more simple, heavy groups like The Animals or The Kinks. The first thing I remember hearing that I really liked was 'The Crystal Ship' by The Doors, because it was so dreary. I remember thinking to myself, 'Oh God, that's fantastic!'"

"The first records I bought were by Jimi Hendrix, The Mothers Of Invention and things like that," he continues. "When I was a kid in Detroit, boogie rock was the big thing with bands like Savoy Brown, Cream, Humble Pie and all that proto-Metal stuff. Then there were MCS and The Stooges, who weren't taken very seriously because they were local bands and almost considered as a joke."

An artistic flashback to this period can be seen in Kelley's painting *Junior High Notebook Cover* (1984), which recreates an example of teenage acid doodling where the logos of Detroit outfits like Amboy Duke, SRC and The MCS have been intensified and draped with Dip Art cowbells or impaled with bloody daggers to create a psychedelic composition. "When I was in junior high school I used to draw on the back of greasers' jackets for them," he reveals, referring to the local 'Teddy boy' subculture. "I was really staunchly anti-greaser but it was a way to deal with it, because where I grew up there was a huge conflict between hippies and greasers. Greasers listened to soul music and R&B, but they realised that all the drugs and fun was in the freak scene so they started slowly moving towards it."

Meanwhile Kelley was burrowing underground by taking up arms with John Sinclair's White Panther Party as a way of distancing himself from the seemingly dominant greaser culture. "The White Panther Party was really important to me," he confesses. "I was 15 years old then, and that was the first time I'd ever thought about a counterculture that was geared towards someone like me. Here was a counterculture based on social circumstances, one that was dealing with the repressive political system where we were living in – greaser culture versus hip culture. All those issues were being talked about by these people and that was really interesting. Soon after leader John Sinclair was jailed they tried to become more seriously involved in real politics. The White Panthers became the less anarchic Rainbow People's Party, and then The MCS left because they wanted to be a successful rock band. By the time I was in high school everything had fallen apart."

During this period Kelley had been drawn to the revolutionary poster art of White Panther Party house designer Gary Grimshaw, and the psychedelic visions of Rick Griffin and Martin Sharp, as well as the artists behind the emerging underground comic movement such as Robert Crumb and S Clay Wilson. He had also been introduced to dada, surrealism and abstract

expressionism through the 'freaks who ran the recycling centre where he occasionally worked.

"I would go through the recycled magazines and rip out all the articles about art," he recalls, "so when I went to undergraduate school I knew much more than anybody else about contemporary art because I had been studying these articles. I was really looking at contemporary graphics and painting, that was my interest. As a result I was able to jump from psychedelia into the fine art world very quickly." This self taught transition from comic book to fine art was also turning Kelley on to music different from the boogie rock that was booming out of every stereo in his neighbourhood. "I realised that if you're listening to The Mothers Of Invention, you know their sound originated from something else," he explains. "So I was already listening to Sun Ra and free jazz and electronic music when I was at high school. When I went to art school it just went full blown, and I was listening exclusively to avant garde music."

#### DESTROY ALL MONSTERS

In 1972 Kelley moved to study art at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. His first year was taken up with learning basic skills like colour theory and life drawing, but once these techniques had been mastered he returned to developing his own style. "What I was doing in my early work," he explains, "was to try and reconcile a crude, almost graffiti style of drawing, one that was especially influenced by Jim Nutt from the Henry Who art group in Chicago; with the kind of compositional, painterly theories of Hans Hofmann and Robert Rauschenberg. I was trying to make a serious compositional painting out of those elements. "Gradually I became less interested in painting and discovered performance and installation art, which gave me a way to bring my musical and theatrical interests into the whole thing."

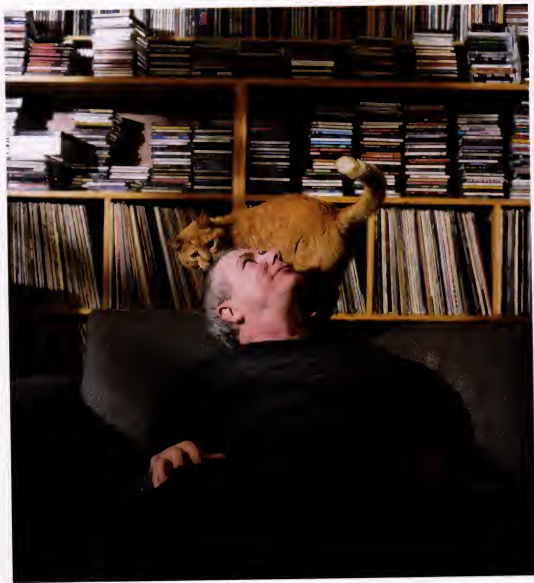
At art school, Kelley hooked up with fellow artist Jim Shaw and together they moved into a rented three-story Victorian house with a sign outside that read "G's Oasis Drive-In Church". "It was a crash pad," he laughs, "with an always changing group of roomers coming in and out. A lot of musicians and artists were living there, but the only stable members of the household were me and Jim Shaw."

After moving into the basement of G's Oasis, Kelley and Shaw began working on extra-curricular projects together. These included making posters, eccentric costumes and sets for events featuring dadaist recitation, readings from obscure texts and "plenty of noise generated by tape loops and whatever else."

"Before we started Destroy All Monsters in 1974," Kelley continues, "Jim Shaw and I had already been doing some happenings and noise inspired performances two years earlier. Our model for these had been the dada manifestos and Russian's *Art Of Noises*, but I couldn't figure out a way how we could contemporise that."

The experimental vibe existing from the G's Oasis house attracted other experimental souls. One day they were visited by film maker Cary Loren and his vampiric girlfriend Niagara who lived down the road. Loren had moved to Ann Arbor after studying with legendary experimental film maker Jack Smith, while Niagara had just returned after dropping out of school. They had

Mike Kelley at home in the Compound, Los Angeles, June 2003



caught wind of what Kelley and Shaw were cooking up in their basement and were keen to get involved. They decided to form a group and called it *Destroy All Monsters*, after the title of a 60s Japanese rubber-monster movie, with a manifesto loosely geared towards experimental music and theatre.

"My early interest was to try and make sculpture out of the rock band situation," says Kelley. "I had discovered pictures of Joseph Beuys's more musical performance pieces and I was really interested in how all the equipment he used was sculpture. I was also intrigued by the pictures I'd seen of John Cage's performances, where his equipment with all of the wires was left hanging around like post-minimalist sculpture. I said, 'Let's try and do something like that, but mix it with the ridiculousness of a theatrical rock band like Alice Cooper.'" Another decisive factor in forming DAM was Kelley's disillusionment with how the rock music he had grown up with had buckled under to bland commercialism.

"All the great bands of my youth had disappeared," he sighs. "The MC5 and The Stooges had broken up, and there were no interesting bands around. All that was left was shitty garage and Country rock. We all decided that DAM was going to be geared towards the freak scene and would resurrect all of the things that had been disposed of... only ten times worse. Like, 'we're only going to do 'LA Blues'. So that's what we did, only there was no audience for it because there were no other noise bands."

As DAM evolved, Kelley introduced other elements into the mix, such as the robotic electro beats of Kraftwerk and Giorgio Moroder's treatment of soul diva Donna Summer's hit "Love To Love You Baby". "I heard that and just said, 'That's the way to go,' and he smiles. "So we dumped electronic rhythms, noise and shit on top of it and proclaimed, 'That's the pop music of the future.'"

Undeterred by the lack of interest in their futuristic rock hybrid, DAM continued to work together on various recording, publishing and film projects. Loren's movies of the group in action were a diverse mix of horror film samples which he distorted and superimposed over newly shot footage, such as *Naglers* rolling around on a beach dressed as a mermaid, while another member emerged from the surf waving giant blooded cardboard lobster claws in her direction as baffled onlookers strolled by. Loren's films were unashamedly influenced by the work of his former teacher Jack Smith, coupled with that of grommeteer Herschell Gordon Lewis, Harry Smith, Roger Corman and various clips from 60s late night TV horror movie fodder.

As well as making films, Loren also supplied Gothic song lyrics which Kelley and Shaw tried to incorporate into the wall of art-rock noise they were constructing. "For Jim and I, *Sun Ra* was the real main influence as far as volume and intensity went," asserts Kelley, "together with that schizophrenic quality which allowed you to surf through all these different musical styles." DAM performances were few and far between, but when they did venture out, the audience reaction was usually depressingly predictable. "The audience hated us," he groans. "They thought what we did was crap. Not only crap, but to them it was offensive. We were naming their groove, we were bringing them down."

"Niagara was the visual centre of the band because she looked like a Warhol superstar," he continues.

"She was born that way. During that early period of DAM, Niagara didn't really do much. She mostly just sat there and sang so low that you couldn't understand her. But she was a point of focus and people would look at her."

In 1976 Kelley graduated from the University of Michigan and left for Los Angeles in order to continue studying art at the California Institute of the Arts. Shaw followed him to LA, leaving Loren and Niagara in Detroit. Their departure signalled the end of the first stage of DAM, which limped along with a new line-up including saxophonist Ben Miller and his brother Larry on guitar, plus ex-Stooges guitarist Ron Ashton and former MCS bass player Michael Davis. For Loren, DAM had turned into what they had been originally rebelling against, and it wasn't long before he and the Miller brothers were ejected by the new regime for being too weird.

Since the original DAM split up in 1976, however, a revival of sorts has taken place, and the reformed group continue to work together on various projects. This rekindling of interest was first ignited in 1994 when Thurston Moore's and Byron Coley's Ecstatic Peace/Father Tod label released an ambitious three CD box set of rehearsal tapes that gave the world its first hearing of this incredible anti-group in action.

"One day Thurston asked me if there were any old DAM recordings around," recalls Kelley. "He was talking about the Ashton period stuff and I said, 'Well, I wasn't part of that, but I have all this stuff before that'. So I sent him some tapes and he was really surprised, because it was not what he expected to hear. It was a much noisier thing that sounded more contemporary than the Ashton version of DAM. I did feel sad that we disbanded before we'd ever done any real recordings, so that's one reason why I wanted to do the three CD set. When it came out there was enough interest in the band for us to decide to get together again and play a couple of gigs as a way of celebrating its release." Another DAM related project that pushes the idea a stage further is *The Destroy All Monsters Collective*, which incorporates other disciplines such as painting and video into the original concept. To date this has included a series of wall sized historical murals depicting famous faces from the 60s Detroit music and entertainment scene — plus a portrait of the original DAM line-up posing in the West Court of the Westland Center Mall in Kelley's hometown suburb; and Loren's pseudo-documentary *Strange Fruit: Rock Apocrypha*, which crudely and hilariously recreates key events in Detroit's mythic rock history.

The film's title sequence ties a Billie Holiday song to the scrawny tail of lost Motor City misfit *Frit* (aka *Frit Of The Loom*), a group legendary for their total unpredictability in performance. Did they influence the early DAM? "Of course," Kelley responds enthusiastically, "because *Frit* were the sloppiest, most anarchic band. They're referred to as a punk rock band, but at the time there was no punk rock. So that meant that they were just weirdos, street slims. They wanted to do these cover versions of hillbilly and rock 'n' roll songs in this hippy environment, which was really a weird thing to do. It was just low but it seemed perfect given that their audience was made up of what *Sinclair* called lumper hippies. Unsophisticated street hippies, that's who they were

gearing their act towards, and there was something wondrously offensive about it."

#### THE POETICS

Between 1976-78, Kelley took a MFA (Master of Fine Arts) degree at CalArts, Los Angeles. The main reason he chose CalArts was because he wanted to be taught by electronic composer Morton Subotnick, who was on the faculty there. This proved impossible. Frustrated, he scoured the campus for potential colleagues to join him in his next art rock project, *The Poetics*.

"To begin with we were just experimenting with some jangly Beethoven-sounding rhythms," Kelley says. "Then I saw this tape that the video artist Vito Oursler had done, it was all voiceover, and his voice sounded so amazing to me that I went over to him and said, 'You have to sing with this band'. He had never done anything like that before and it took a lot of convincing on my part to get him to agree, but eventually we started working together."

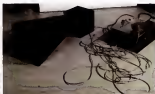
Reluctant to be limited to a conventional rock format, Kelley and Oursler experimented with several angles, including a set of songs, before finally deciding that what they really wanted to play was a mournful, droning soundtrack for non-existent film footage in the style of such composers as Ennio Morricone, Bernard Herrmann and Nino Rota — the results of which can be heard on two recently released recordings, *Critical Enquiry in Green* and the three CD set *Remains Of Recordings 1972-1983*. The Poetics remained in constant flux, with a main core of semi-professional musicians who came and went around the core of their two founding members. It was during this stage of their development that Kelley taught himself to play drums and percussion. "In the beginning I never thought of myself as a drummer, as a timekeeper," he confides. "I thought of myself as somebody who provided colour. I was also collecting junk — electronics, blenders, vacuum cleaners — and making tape loops which I would treat as percussion. I eventually learned to be a kit drummer, because those Poetics songs were built around precise time signature changes and I had to learn to do that."

The main problem facing Kelley and Oursler, however, was where next to take *The Poetics*. "We were already thinking about crossover issues," he explains, "like how does this fit within the fine art context? This was during the period of the art band movement where you had bands like *Dvo*, Talking Heads and Laurie Anderson, who were attempting to be in the music scene and the art world at the same time. I thought this would be a good way to deal with that issue, because that history had yet to be written, so I said, 'That's what we're going to do.'"

Just as *Destroy All Monsters* mutated from an experimental outfit into an art project, so *The Poetics* grew into a touring workshop of ideas that came to be known as *The Poetics Project*. Two versions of *The Poetics Project* were devised, the first being a video 'documentary' showing where the two artists lived and worked, accompanied by a series of interviews with various musicians from the art rock period. "We're playing with it," admits Kelley, "because parts of it are totally fabricated. What we're saying is that we're going to deal with this history, only it's already wrong, so let's just play with that."

The second version, which recently exhibited at London's Barbican as *The Poetics Project 1977-1997*,

Clockwise from bottom left: Jim Shaw (left) and Mike Kelley with The Stooges' Ron Asheton (center); Destroy All Monsters' sound equipment; Destroy All Monsters press shot; Kelley, Ann Arbor, mid-'80s; Spirit Collector device used in Kelley's *Spirit Voices* performance (1978); The Postle press shot, 1978 (left to right: Kelley, Tony Cusler, John Miller); with Beak Youth in *Pluto's Cane*, *Art/Mo's Chapel*, Lincoln's *Pro/Me*, New York, 1988; drumming with Bongwater's Ann Magnuson, 1988; Destroy All Monsters reunion show, Osaka, 1990; *Phosphorhizons* performance, Los Angeles, 1979; The Tower Of Babel, LA, 1979; The Grease At Delphi, 1979 (sitting over melting plastic emitting noxious fumes, the sound of Kelley gagging captured by mic in his mouth)



expands on this idea, incorporating video interviews with such musicians as John Cale, Kim Gordon, Alan Vega and Tony Conrad played back on TV monitors and gallery walls. Elsewhere, footage of New York No Wave composer Glenn Branca and Throbbing Gristle frontman Genesis P-Orridge discussing their careers at length are shown on crudely painted panels, or projected onto a suspended fiberglass blob to create a distorted head effect. Kelley explains the reasoning behind this choice of presentation. "We decided to create these New Wave styled painted panels and treat them as architecture for this presentation of music, interviews and documentary footage. It's more like a cliché of a multimedia presentation; like the kind of exhibition a historical museum would have."

"When you think about something like Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable," he continues, "that was a real attempt to use pop culture in a very McLuhanesque discussion about media overload and media saturation. It was like, 'We're going to bombard you with films, with the media and noise. It was very antagonistic. It still amazes me that, at the time, the art world just didn't know how to handle it. To them it was just pop music. They didn't know how to sell it, but now they do. I think the difference between the art world and the pop culture has been erased and today there is no difference."

Kelley and Oursler's chosen interview subjects were crucial to the project, as all had emerged from artistic backgrounds. "They were artists who were going into rock music for a reason," he clarifies. "There's a certain point when that changes and rock music is just something that's given, and that's what I really wanted to try and discuss in The Poetics Project." But, he continues, he and Oursler had different ideas about how the project should be fleshed out, meaning it remains unfinished. "So whatever I want to do now I have to do on my own," he sighs.

As one of the few groups of a later generation to acknowledge art within rock context, Sonic Youth are natural allies of Kelley. After they were asked to provide the background music for a Kelley performance piece called Pato's Cove, Rothko's Chapel, Lincoln's Profile (1986) at Artists' Space in New York, SY returned the compliment and commissioned Kelley to provide the cover art for their 1992 album *Dirty*. His response was a series of photographic portraits of old, worn, stuffed toys, once loved but since abandoned by their infant owners when they grew up and reached out for other things.

"It was something that was done specifically for a young audience," confirms Kelley, "which they would grow out of and turn to something else, just like I did. So in that sense I thought it was an OK thing to do. It didn't bother me that the punk rock audience was very different from the art audience, and that their understanding of it would also be different. I tried to make it a simple thing that they could understand which was more geared towards their age." The first copies of the CD came with an inkjet that featured another of Kelley's photographs from the same series called *Nostalgic Depiction Of The Innocence Of Childhood* (1990). Unlike the cover, however, this image showed a naked couple wiping their shit-smearred backsides with giant cuddly toys. After the first run sold out, the record company Geffen pulled the image off the package. "I was unhappy about

that," he groans, "because I thought that added an adult edge to the whole thing. I never expected any problems to arise from it because it was more silly than pornographic. It wasn't real shit and you couldn't see any genitalia, you just saw their butts." To add insult to injury, the image has also been left out of the recently released deluxe version of *Dirty*. Those who wish to see Kelley's photograph in the context it was designed for can do so by visiting Sonic Youth's official Website ([sonicyouth.com](http://sonicyouth.com)). "I can't believe that," he fumes. "Even though they've done this fancy box set, that's obviously geared towards a very limited collector based audience, it has still been censored."

#### SCANNING THE DEAD

Kelley's interest in sound has reached dimensions far beyond the earthbound constrictions of rock 'n' roll. In 2002 he hooked up with UK sound artist Scanner (aka Robin Rimbaud) to work on an installation called *Esprits Des Pans* for the Sonic Process exhibition at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. The finished piece included recordings made on location at 12 Persian sites with connections to popular music, spirituality or the history of modernist breakdown. Houses built included those once lived in by French pop guru Serge Gainsbourg, American poet and Doors vocalist Jim Morrison, dada poet Tristan Tzara, and decadent writer Isidore Ducasse (aka Lautréamont) whose only novel *The Typhoon of Maldoror* was much admired by the surrealist movement. *Esprits Des Pans* is intended as a homage to the European Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP) researchers Friedrich Jürgensen, Attila Von Szalay and Konstantin Raudive, all of whom attempted to amplify and record dead voices on magnetic tape, rather than relying on communication through a human medium.

"We went to these places and recorded blank mindsets with the microphone turned off, so that we were recording the machine," explains Kelley. The idea being that the location was supposed to impress itself onto the recording. Then we amplified the blank recordings and looked for anomalies in them, which was similar to what Raudive was looking for in white noise. He'd search for and find anomalies in his spirit recordings that he would then slow down, loop and try to read as speech. Instead of reading speech, Scanner and I treated it as a musical piece. We would find spikes in the blank discs – although mostly they were just anomalies in the pressing because there's no such thing as a blank disc – and slow them down, pitchshift them and loop them."

Kelley's interest in spirit voices and EVP research goes back to his art student days in Ann Arbor where he first started experimenting with blank recording tapes. "I think Raudive's tapes are really interesting because they're not music and don't have any pretensions to being music, but they can bring a lot to music," he insists. "I was trying to get away from becoming caught up with both rock music or avant garde tropes – as I was with DAM and The Poetics – to get into something that wasn't either of those but still be doing music."

"I had also heard La Monte Young's early sine tone recordings," he remembers, "and I was interested that blank tape already had that on it, meaning every cassette you bought was issued with a minimalist recording. Of course, since I lived volume and distortion I couldn't let it be that way," laughs Kelley.

"I should have been smart and just amplified raw tape, but instead I would play them, run them through fuzzboxes and play along with them."

In the late '70s Kelley teamed up with fellow artist David Askevold to work on a mixed media project based on the postergate phenomena and the history of spiritualism, called *The Postergate*. While researching it, Kelley became intrigued by such primitive spiritualist props as speaking horns, and he was inspired to make his own version called *Spirit Collector* (1978).

"Speaking horns were basically distortion devices where an ambiguity of white noise was added to voices and sounds," he explains. "The *Spirit Collector* was simply a box fitted with a megaphone and lined with cotton that muffles and lowers the frequency of the sound coming in, so all you get is a recording of subharmonics with a hint of ambient sound."

He also continued to be inspired by the writings and electronic tape experiments of Konstantin Raudive and attempted to emulate them with a 1978 performance piece called *Spirit Voices*. "I would get a volunteer to listen to the tapes I had made, and they were to say if they heard the voices of somebody who they knew was dead in them," he recalls. Kelley, "If they heard that voice, they were then to speak the voice while I accompanied them on a drum. That was really minimal. It was like me boeing down pop music to simply vocals and music. Except the music was white noise and the vocals were a projection into white noise."

"What I really liked about psychedelic music was that you couldn't understand what the fuck they were saying," he concludes. "Like you're listening to Jim Hendrix or The Moody Blues and you're thinking, 'What the hell are they talking about?' This whole 'spirit voice' phenomenon was just that, like projecting into white noise."

From his Los Angeles base, Mike Kelley continues to be a creative force and a magnet for other artists and musicians. Recent projects have involved him playing and recording the Pato's Cove, a group of four with fellow California artist and writer Cameron Jaffe, and performing an elaborate multi-story UFO abduction piece in Japan and Vienna with friend and artist Paul McCarthy and Japanese noise musician Nakahara Masaya aka Violent Onsen Gelsa. Westward of all, he's just played in The Chance Band, an oddball backing group convened for a reading by French postmodern philosopher Jean Baudrillard, who appeared onstage all shook up and wearing an Elvis style gold lame jacket. How on earth did this happen?

"There was this symposium that was sponsored by the Art Center College of Design, and Baudrillard was the main speaker," grins Kelley. "He also writes poetry besides his philosophy, so they asked him if he would perform with a band as a fun thing to do. We performed in this minor casino called Whiskey Pete's on the outskirts of Las Vegas, which was a shithole in the middle of nowhere. It was very improvisational, with Baudrillard coming in at times and just speaking or reading over the top of it. We had to drag him onstage and he was OK, but I don't think he knew what he was getting into." □ For info on Mike Kelley and Compound Annex CDs, go to [www.mikekelley.com](http://www.mikekelley.com). For more info on Destroy All Monsters projects and releases, contact DAM c/o Book Beat, 26010 Greenfield, Oak Park, MI 48237, USA, email [Bookbeat@aol.com](mailto:Bookbeat@aol.com)







# YANKEE DOODLE DANDIES

When they're not traipsing round the world as core members of Björk's backing group, or completing studies in Renaissance lit at UC Berkeley, San Francisco duo Matmos remain devoted to sourcing sounds from a wide range of anachronistic and historically resonant objects. Martin C Schmidt (left) and Drew Daniel talk David Toop through the potent braw of British and American folk, medieval instruments and domestic disturbance that makes up their new album, *The Civil War*.

Photos: Jo Ann Toy



**Regicide** is the act of killing a king. Kings are not easy to find in the contemporary world so the search for our victim must move backwards in time. Moving backwards is hazardous. We are likely to lose our way, stumble over objects, slip on ideas, fall painfully. As we fall and hit objects, we make sound and from that sound a world may emerge. May I transpire that this emergent world is more suitable and agreeable to our needs than the one in which we currently live.

Here on a stage are two men making sounds. One of them is rubbing, or grazing, or perhaps frothing the other (implying both surrealism and sexual sensuality) with a contact microphone. The process is gentle, slow, intimate, funny and rather wonderful in a contact we might asphyxiate describe as pop. The music, led by Björk, neatly accommodates this sonic and visual outcome of this activity. Quite clearly, the amplified body is an object in this situation, mapped and broadcast in a version of itself that has assumed a radically new shape, unrecognisable yet still connected, umbilical cable plugged into the maternal PA, to its source.

For their musical life, the two men call themselves Matmos. Face to face, Martin C Schmidt is on the tall side. Aspects of his personality – a dry, clever wit and infrequently volatile emotions concealed under languid, somewhat old-fashioned manners – suggest a contrast between James Stewart and Henry Ford, though I'm working on the companion. Drew Daniel appears the busier of the two, smaller, more voluble by far. His ideas sparkle. Schmidt is responsible for mixing and clearly acts as the ground when Daniel's flights of fancy drift off into the stratosphere.

Matmos may be considered a weather vane at this point, one indicator among many, all registering a change in our haunted climate. Electronics, computers, memory, instruments, folk music, unpredictable influences, political discontents: we can use all these words and no doubt will. First, we have to begin with objects.

Objects are central to the Matmos *modus operandi* and aesthetic. The cover artworks of their records contain an accumulation of objects, or partial objects: a CCTV camera, a barge, a whoopee cushion, balloons, a scalpel blade, pharmaceuticals, surgical scissors, a skull, fleshy bits. The majority of these objects are starting points for musical compositions. To take a notorious example, the scalpel and fleshy bits are components central to their last album, *A Chance To Cut Is A Chance To Cure*, in which audio field recordings of cosmetic surgery procedures procured in the intervention clinics of California were themselves cut and modified into new sound bodies.

This concentration on objects or concrete processes and their audio derivatives is so deeply embedded in the Matmos method that *The Civil War*, their new record, is a totally unexpected departure. Actually not totally unexpected. In May we spoke at some length, face to face, partly about their collaborations with Björk on *Vespertine* and subsequent live performances. The Incredible String Band and autoharps crept into the conversation, apparently inspirations behind *The Civil War*. Yet even with this foreknowledge, on first hearings I found myself struggling to place their album in any sensible context, or find a room in my own overcrowded regions of listening within which such odd, cryptic, bastardised music could assert itself and relate its story.

Speaking to them again, this time via the telephone to their apartment in San Francisco, I felt an urgent imperative. From the outset, a weighty suitcase of ideas must be carried into the conversation and spilled open. Not to be mean, but I know it to be a trap, since the temptations of this spillage will prompt Daniel to spall himself open, thus saving me a considerable job of work. To a degree, this goes to plan except for the 359 remaining degrees, which go not to plan at all. So

my own perception of the album begins to take a better shape. Ideas are discussed at length, covering subject matter that ranges from Sir Walter Scott's *Juanhoe* to Vienna Actionist Otto Mühl and his Zealous Order of Canded Kings, William Morris to Bob Hope (deceased), electroclash to Harry Smith, but beginning, middle and end are marked and fixed by constructive, good humoured objections, refusals and withdrawals. I begin to get a sense of how these two create their unique tracks through vigorous dialogue, not to mention screaming matches about controversies such as the dynamic level of a guitar.

This vigorous dialogue goes some way to explaining the album title. After considerations such as *Coffin Of Abuse*, *The Pleasure Window* and *The South*, they arrived at their final choice. By email, Daniel explains: "While much of the Southern gospel and Country elements to the record made it a good candidate, the English folk and medieval elements seemed to be too ornery and resistant to make that title stick. As for *The Civil War*, it was Martin's idea, and struck him suddenly at a Turkish restaurant on Valentine's Day. The title is meant to suture the English Civil War of 1640 with the American Civil War of 1865 with the domestic civil war between us as boyfriends and band mates with the current civil war in America between those who support Bush and those who despise him as the spineless usurper that he is. It struck us both at the time as too misanthropic a title and altogether too 'heavy' as a title for such a 'pretty' record. But after a few more courses it seemed to settle in our minds and hit its stick."

Aside from a field holder, there are no vocals, even though this feels like it could be a collection of songs. The key to the record may be somewhere among the underlying ideas that are signalled obliquely in both title and sounds, I suggest. Well, maybe but no. "For us it was about choosing instruments first," says Daniel, "and not a kind of programmatic sounding moment of coming up with a concept. It was a weird record to make. It wasn't the record we thought we were making."

Neither was it the record I thought I was hearing. The first track, "Regicide", is as far from *A Chance To Cut* as it's possible to imagine. Immediately we encounter that Incredible String Band influence. "For me, most directly, the way the hurdy-gurdy line is handled on 'Regicide' is homage," says Daniel. "Sam Fuller said that homage is French for no-off. It's a no-off of the song 'Chinese Wall'. I think it's the first track on [1987's] *3000 Spirits Or The Layers Of The Onion*."

"It takes some patience to listen to The Incredible String Band," Schmidt concedes. "It's a bit like kmocha. Take a mouthful right after a glass of milk; it's over. I was given a cassette of The Incredible String Band, oh, I don't know, I must have been about 17. A part smoking 17 year old in what year was that? 1981. It had been my cousin's tape from 73 or whatever and it had magazine pictures cut out and glued to it. Hippie sort of cosmic stuff. It was a great document from that time period for me to receive. I was fully sympathetic. I was a big fan of Yes and Led Zeppelin. It slotted in with that stuff. For a 17 year old Zeppie teenager it was a much wider plea to swallow than any of those big rock bands. It turned my head to folk music's influence on what became stadium rock. The other one that I received in the same stack of tapes was John Ramson's *Sir John A Lot Of*, which remains one of my favourite records."

"Sir John A Lot Of" was one of those couple records," says Daniel. "You know when a couple starts up and you get to know each other you suddenly get to deal with the things that the other person likes that you don't like yet? Records that can't be played when someone else is in the room. Sir John A Lot Of was one of those records. I didn't understand how Martin could listen to this hippy twanging."

"Oh, but you came around, didn't you dear?" says Schmidt.

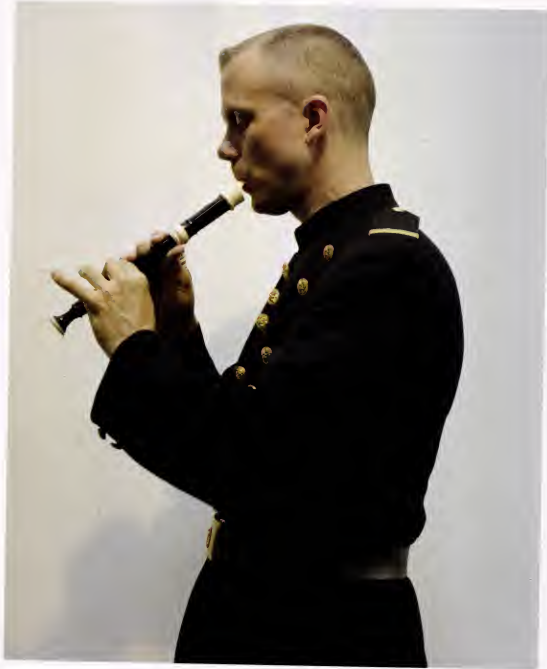
Despite personal ambivalences and some specific hostilities, I can see the inspirational qualities of this odd period of British music from the late 1960s, in which medievalism, psychedelic pastoralism and orientalist whimsy mixed with folk revivalism, jazz, blues, rock, poetry and beddit folklore maddening. For one thing, what Schmidt describes as "artificial hard drive environments", particularly those driven by beats per minute, can hardly satisfy every emotional nuance, political conviction and imaginative imperative of the human condition. Other sounds are demanding to be heard and these sounds imply or assert their own structures.

This is exactly how *The Civil War* was born. Working with harpist Zeena Parkins on Björk tunes, Schmidt and Daniel acquired the instruments and the curator of a keyboard museum, to an auction of antique instruments at Sotheby's. "It seemed like a landscape that followed pretty quickly from an impulse purchase," says Daniel. "It was this incredibly stressful experience of watching the prices go up and up and up. Martin and I got our hands dirty purchasing some psalteries from 1865." "Because they were called fairy bells," says Schmidt. "It was partially the price and the environment and also because psalteries are the simplest musical instrument you can think of. They're just six strings strung on a box. There's no neck, there's no pitch changing you can do other than tuning it. You pluck the strings and that's the sound it makes. Which appeals to me."

"Once we'd acquired that we decided to splash out on a hurdy-gurdy and an autoharp and the record followed from this," says Daniel. "It seemed like the hurdy-gurdy led in one direction. It led in a sort of English direction and the autoharp in the American direction."

In other words, I say, you began with objects, just like always. "That's absolutely right," says Daniel. "I think we tried to treat these instruments, at least at first, as objects, in the same way that we would treat a rubber Teletext or a bucket of oatmeal, that you treat it as a material thing and try to sound it in every way that you can regardless of what the correct way to play that instrument might be. I hope I'm not just making apologies for our ignorance and incompetence but we spent as much time sampling the clucking of the key of the hurdy-gurdy as we did the strings and the actual sound it's supposed to make. The battery of all the percussive sounds in "Z.O.C.K." is made out of Martin's fingers touching and tapping and clicking. It's not that we don't respect the ability to really play instruments. That's where the great musicians come in. When we need someone who can really properly play acoustic guitar we'll call up Mark Lightfoot or if we need someone to play piano, we'll get David Grubbs, to see how they'd respond to what we've made. But the germ of it all is made in a kind of innocence."

This Venusian view of musical instruments, as if they were the wooden equivalent of liposuction samples or the sounds of a plucked and bowed net cage, is particular to our time. People with no experience of music or musical instruments approach sound work through timbre and beats, using samplers, computer sequencing and audio software programs, then find they have hacked out a place for themselves in a world they only partially understand, a world of harmonic logic and instrumental virtuosity. Last October Schmidt and Daniel were Peter Herbs Visiting Artists at Harvard University. During a seminar on sound art they reached an embarrassing moment when, as Daniel describes it, "a few minutes into a slide lecture explaining of what a score is and what a composition is, we realised that the room full of students who had claimed, out of false modesty, to be musical novices in fact knew quite a bit more than we did on the subject of reading sheet music and how to play 'real' instruments properly! Luckily Hrvatski [aka Keith Fullerton Whitman] was on hand to dazzle 'em with MAX or we'd have been run out of town on a rail as a pair of absolute charlatans."



"Of course playing Björk's music live has influenced us," adds Daniel. "It's exposed us to chord progressions and traditional verse/chorus structure, something we previously knew very little about. And those structures are more present on the new album than they've ever been in our music before."

If the unearthing of British and American folk musics and their psychedelic reinventions pushes the album in one direction, musique concrète, vintage electronics and industrial music survivals continue to pull in another. Sitting in a clearing at track number seven, surrounded by pedal steel guitars, bangers, marching drums, hurdy-gurdy, autoharp and psalteries is "Bait And Holler," which continues the Matmos technique of recording an object or process, then modeling those sounds into parts or the whole of a track. The object in this instance is a rabbit pelt, used as a source for an experiment in audio narrative.

"Yes, it was the first story song that I think I've made," says Daniel. "Martin and I feel that there is a narrative component to what we do but this is the first sort of telling a story about a rabbit. It's meant to be brutally literal, that way, like a Beatrix Potter story of a rabbit that's running through dry branches and then suddenly a farmer appears and frightens it with the holler. We found a recording that the Smithsonian released of a field holler contest in North Carolina.

Well this one's a rabbit holler that the farmer uses to stun a rabbit. Supposedly that aah-aah-aah sound will make a rabbit freeze in its tracks and then a hunting dog can catch it. So in the narrative the farmer suppresses the rabbit. The rabbit is still and silent and doesn't move and gradually sneaks away and makes it across the clearing to a highway and stops, looking at the cars going by. That's the narrative. It's not really like a cross-art beast fable or anything. It's meant to be fairly direct. I don't know if anyone will get any of this from just hearing the song but it was the way we structured the sound."

"It was just obviously a bucolic countryside sort of thing," says Schmidt. "It was good to deal with somebody else's narrative. It wasn't about people. It was about animals."

"But also a moment of danger, I guess," says Daniel. "Of threat, of perceiving something bucolic and pleasant. That's part of what makes it hard for me to get a handle on this record. There's fairly dark and frenzied elements but you don't want to remember them. You listen to the record and they're there but when the records over you can't bring them back."

"If you say so yourself," says Schmidt.

Personally, from one moment to the next in this complicated record of impacted densities and hidden detail, I hear plenty of turbulence, contradictory emotions and unresolved obsessions. There is always the feeling of an undertow, even in the most delicately lava lamp moments. Matmos had considered attaching three quotations to the liner notes of *The Civil War*: one from Foucault writing about Pierre Klossowski's novel, *The Baphomet*; one from CS Lewis's *The Allegory of Love*; the third from poet James Merrill:

"A presence in our midst, unseen, unseen, Unconscious to take what he can get."

This quote from Merrill is taken from *The Book Of Ephraim*, a long narrative poem that constructs new mythologies from spirit communications, the authenticity of which Merrill only believes as an imaginative reality. "All three quotes are about, among other things," explains Daniel, "historical knowledge, some kind of encounter between a contemporary figure and avatars or representatives of the past. Merrill is describing one of the entities or spirits from Greek antiquity that he and his boyfriend communicated with through an Ouija board and is understandably spooked. They are imagining the right conditions for a magic trick that would turn history

into something like experience."

This phrase, magic trick, and the notion of turning history into lived experience, both turn like arrows hitting the target in a Robin Hood movie. "To me it can occur with a minimum of resources," Daniel says when I raise the point during our phone conversation. "Magic trick would be an interesting way to get into it. In some of our songs it's a bit similar to the clichéd description of what's in a witches cauldron: eye of newt and tongue of frog, pet of rabbit and three dried branches. Maybe only a few elements are needed and they can stand in for an indefinitely large bank of experience.

That may be just a single rabbit pelt that's pure dead matter if you rubbed it the right way. It might be able to call us back a lot. More than you planned."

This makes me think of Coli and their invocatory approach, Joseph Byrd and his satirical montages for the United States Of America, or Basil Kirchin and his powerful sampled assemblages of primal communications. Sampling and genre dislocations are experiments in history and memory, machines for soaking up fragments of the past and plugging them into the unconscious archive — not unlike the semi-intelligent lake of pure evil, the Matmos, a "character" in Roger Vadim's 1968 film *Barbarella*. Splayed beneath the pleasure city Sogo, the Matmos absorbs the city's negative energies and manipulates Sogo's citizens to satisfy its own desires.

During our discussion about the rabbit and its significance as thickener in American folklore, Daniel mentions Walt Disney's *Song Of The South*, his first movie of cinema as a child. Having watched a video of this disturbing, racist film many times, courtesy of my daughter's enthusiasm some years ago, I ask if it's too far-fetched to draw an analogy between the clever blend of live acting and animation and Matmos mixing rough folk instruments like the acoustic hurdy-gurdy with electronic sound sources. "Not a bit," retorts Schmidt, after they have both recovered from this revelation that *Song Of The South* blended actors with cartoons. So is proven the selective nature of memory.

"I really do like what happens when those rub against each other because it's anachronistic," continues Daniel. "It's harder to place when this record is made. Even with electronics, different eras of electronics, because it's a series of consumer innovations, they're also fixed in time very strongly. You can instantly tell the difference between a novelty kitsch Moog record of the 1960s and we're really going to imitate classical instruments" that swap across the Wendy Carlos era in the late 70s. On this record, we very strongly wanted a 60s keyboard feel for certain sounds, but to have that always out of and mangled and dragged into the present. Luckily we had this opportunity to be at Harvard and use some of their synthesizers. Some rather mouty and rusty innovations — a Buchla (Don Buchla's modular electronic music system) and one of the Serges (Serge modular synthesizer, designed by Serge Tcherepnin). I think Coli are doing that well recently. That was one of the things I liked about their [1999 CD] *Music To Play In The Dark*."

"Nor till the poets among us can be 'literalists of the imagination' — above innocence and triviality and can present for inspection, 'imaginary gardens with loaths in them' 'shall we have it' — Marianne Moore, *Poetry* (1920)

Uncertain about my own conclusions, I send Matmos an enquiry concerning all these inferences. Daniel responds in typically erudite fashion: "In Latin, carmina means song or tune but it also means spell, formula, incantation. Binding together multiple elements in order to call something up. I've been listening to Coli since I was 17, and I've always loved the way that they implied a richly esoteric world behind the recordings. The scandal of 'The Sewage Worker's Birthday Party'

[from *Scatology*, 1984] is that you don't know what those scatological noises are, and so you are free to imagine endless scenarios. It enralls you because you're placed in a position of only partial knowledge; if it were spelled out into a specific doctrine or 'answer' it would only break the spell."

Throughout our conversations, verbal and electronic, there is a three-way tussle over this latter point. Can *The Civil War* be considered a political album, a reaction against the hawks of America co-opting warped patriotism in the service of world domination, or an album of ideas concerned with redsovereignty and the myths of national identity? It is important that many of its obscure themes we be opaque to all but the most dedicated trivia hounds?

"I think with Matmos there's been political moments in what we've done as a band," says Daniel, "but they've always hung on archival or memorial preservation rather than a slogan or party politics. For example, the Polish train on our first record, the last song, 'Schluss', it says it's made out of water and breathing and Polish trains, but we didn't include the detail that it was actually a recording of the trains that go to Auschwitz. I think we felt that if we had said Auschwitz trains it would have been a cheap shot. It's not really meant to function in that way. That's the esoteric component of how we curate detail. It's what we explain or don't explain. For example, in the liner notes of our version of 'The Stars And Stripes Forever' we say that sampling is being done but we don't explain what all the samples are, in part because there are certain songs in there that are private."

"What is our relationship to the past and what respect do we owe it?" Daniel asks. "What possible access could we have to it? For me it's a very personal question because the other half of my life is being a grad student and studying Renaissance literature. I believe at some level that we have a strong and richly real relation to art from 400 years ago, but under what conditions and to what ends? That's endlessly contested and navigated. I have a side to me that's very canonical, I really do believe that if you spend a lot of time worrying about how Shakespeare's poetry works your mind will be improved. If I didn't believe that I wouldn't teach literature. I do see all the risks. It's regarded as foolish or laughable to pretend that we can know what people 400 years ago were thinking."

We discuss up to Sir Walter Scott and Harry Smith. "There's always a something before you that kind of haunts you and bothers you," says Daniel. "It was on my mind because I just read Sir Walter Scott's *Ivanhoe*, which is definitely about the English national identity project, but when you read the narrative it's so worried about how to handle Saxon versus Norman, racial conflict and where to put the Jews and how to make this up to something singular. That's what's great about something like Harry Smith's *Anthology* [Of American Folk Music, 1959]. It's a multiple document, across race and across language. It's not one America and it never was."

I ask if this theme, the reassertion of a more complex and inclusive idea of national identity, clawed back from the British invasions of Bush's "our great nation," might be a subconscious thrust beneath the surface of the record? No, for the first time, Schmidt protests. "Oh, I don't know," he says. "It sounds good if you say yes to that but our concerns when we were making the record were more concrete than that. They were 'Who is the music for?', rather than 'How far back can this sound take us?'"

I protest that I was referring to a subconscious thrust, rather than a literary and literal enactment of theory. "You will have to talk directly to our subconscious," says Schmidt.

You mean I have to make it, I say. ☐ The Civil War is out this month on *Mastodon*

"MAGIC IN OUR SONGS IS A BIT  
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# INVENTOR OF

A central figure in Swinging London's Ladbroke Grove boho psychedelic scene, electronic sound designer Ron Gessin's life of eccentric performance, playful paradigm busting, pioneering TV and film soundtracks and collaborations with early Progressive rock outfits such as Pink Floyd has taken him down some of experimental music's more unmarked paths. Mika Barnes tracks him down in his Sussex hideaway, contemplating his spanner collection. Photos: Anna Schori



"Ron Geesin, composer for all media, live performer and one-man record company, works from his own studio both writing for musicians and working with complex multitracking techniques with his stringed and keyboard instruments, many tape recorders and electronic equipment to make highly original material ranging from cheeky tunes to large-scale soundscapes. He can also make any electronic effect to individual requirements" – Ron Geesin, *Headspace* demo tape sleeve notes, 1978

**After conversing at length with Ron Geesin at Headrest** – he had a East Sussex for the past 30 years you're left under no illusion that, if anyone had ever taken him up on his offer to custom build any electronic sound, he would have managed with ease. After all, his achievements in this area range from the childlike synth miniature "Laughing Robot" to "Frenzy", a piece of pounding motorik used as sonic accompaniment to car crashes in the violent 70s TV cop series *The Sweeney*. He is also a supreme pragmatist, on one occasion constructing a tape collage of body noises – including his own farts. An enterprising fellow.

Geesin, who still retains a gentle Scots accent, was one of the most original British musicians to emerge in the 1960s, one of an even smaller number from that era who has held on to his restless, questioning attitude. As one of the decade's renaissance men, he could justifiably include poet, lecturer, installation and instrument builder, and occasional actor in his CV.

Revised to 1968: Geesin was living with his wife Frances in a flat on Elgin Crescent, off Ladbroke Grove in West London. In its cramped confines he had constructed a studio, where he recorded the idiosyncratic mix of music and rotation – or "notions and ideas bashed down," as he describes it – that was his 1967 debut album, *A Rose Of Eyebrows*. He recalls a chance encounter at the time: "I was walking up the Portobello Road and Yoko Ono was walking down the road, and she asked me if I wanted to have my bottom on film, and I said, No. I was too shy. I'm only an extrovert on the stage. I also thought, Christ! Not another avant garde film."

Ono was casting for *Film No 4* (aka *Bottoms*), and the moment typified the Ladbroke Grove area's reputation as a hive of creative activity. "There was an artistic community," Geesin confesses. "Even if it was only because there were so many adventurous, creative persons in that area that you couldn't help but bump into someone if you went out. You could certainly pop round to someone's house with an artistic problem like, I can't get this bloody piece finished, how do you think it should go?"

In 1969 Ron and Frances jointly bought a house around the corner, at 208 Ladbroke Grove, with the graphic artist and experimental film maker Steve Dwoskin. Geesin built another studio and, informed by influences as wide as jazz, Edgar Varèse and the BBC abstract radio comedy *The Goons*, he composed music ranging from ensemble parts for Pink Floyd's first large-scale composition "Atom Heart Mother" to his own "Invention for One-String Barjo And Witter Cabaret". The latter, recorded for a John Peel session, was finally released in 2003 on *Not Necessarily "English Music"* (EMI), the historical compilation of British esoteric sounds put together by David Toop.

In the same studio he fulfilled commissions for sound libraries and TV commercials, and composed soundtracks for big budget movies like John Schlesinger's *Sunday Bloody Sunday* and Roy Battersby's *The Body*, as well as Dwoskin's more experimental films.

Today, it is sometimes gilded by a retrospective nostalgia, but the notorious Ladbroke Grove/Notting Hill scene of the 60s and 70s was the milieu in which Geesin and various other performers came into their own. The area contained pockets of notoriously bad housing, into which immigrants from Britain's colonial outposts, particularly the Caribbean, had been shunted since the 50s. The influx created racial tension which finally erupted into four days of what the press called "racial riots" in August 1986. One positive outcome was the following year's launch of the annual Notting Hill Carnival.

Chimp evolved to attract drinkers, artists and outsiders, in the early 60s Ladbroke Grove became a hive of beatnik activity. By 1967, All Saints Church Hall in Powis Gardens (now the Tolernside) was the venue for several key psychedelic happenings, including some of Pink Floyd's earliest shows. Local activists included Mick Farren, vocalist with The Deviants and journalist for the underground magazine *Interzone*. Times, while Glen Sweeney, of transcendental rock improvisers Third Ear Band, dedicated "Ghetto Ragga" to "all the cats in the Grove". By 1973, fantasy writer Michael Moorcock, who described his longrunning fictional character, Jerry Cornelius, as "the coolest assassin on the Ladbroke Grove block", was having future collaborations with space rockers Hawkwind.

In the mid-70s, Farren was still describing the area as a "ghetto", but others were beginning to call it "funny" and "bohemian". During the 80s the Notting Hill/Ladbroke Grove district underwent considerable gentrification, converting the spaces that once sheltered huddles of bombed-out freaks planning acts of countercultural insurrection in between lobbies into swanky designer apartments. However it's not the area's lingering reputation for bonged-out Bohemian creativity that appeals to Geesin. In a 1989 interview with *Rolling Stone*, he confirmed that, when playing after smoking marijuana, "very little happened". His one-man live shows were more about spontaneity and eruptive energy. Nevertheless, he was a star attraction at psychedelic centres like Middle Earth.

Until he moved out of London in the early 70s, Chez Geesin was a like a cafe, he recalls, with artists always dropping by. "I was fresh. I wasn't going around dressed like some assumed character, I was dressed probably like this," he continues, looking down at a fairly nondescript pullover and trousers. "There must have been a certain basic honesty, plus the humour and nonsense that goes on, and it just fitted in well with the world around there." During this period he met BBC DJ John Peel, Pink Floyd, The Who's Pete Townshend, singer/songwriters Ralph McTell, Roy Harper and Bridget St John, and poets Peter Brown and Michael Horowitz. Composer Gavin Bryars slept on Geesin's floor for a while, and eventually took over providing music to Dwoskin's films.

"But the negative side," he warns, "was that you'd get all sorts of freaks and weirdos coming around with projects they thought would definitely make the big time. I'd get involved with them and they'd all collapse, whether it was a film or a project for the radio, or whatever. Viv Stanshall and I were always talking about some new project. Nothing ever happened. But then if insurance salesmen get a one in ten connection that day, they think they've done all right."

Born in 1943 in Stevenston in Ayrshire, Scotland, Ron Geesin was a fan of harmonica maestro Larry Adler as a child. At the age of 14, he demonstrated his practical skills by making a barjo, attaching the frets with sellotape. He picks Louis Armstrong's *Hot Seven's* 1927 "Potato Head Blues" as the first record that really moved him. "I must have got that when I was

15," he remembers, "because as soon as I found out where Chris Barber was getting his material from, I got rid of the white revaliant nonsense pretty damn quick."

Later in his teens he learnt piano, but he was beginning to feel stifled by "the tight social feeling about the place" and left Scotland at 18. "I ran away as soon as was decent... it was half indentured, actually," he confesses. Ending up in London, he joined the jazz group The Original Downtown Syncoats. Their self-titled debut album, came out in 1963. "What does he think of it now? 'It's rubbish!'" he exclaims. "I'm not proud of it at all. I'm proud of the fact that I could get up on a stage and make a noise on a piano having not even been self-taught by one year. But I always describe that band as some adolescents having a late fling before setting down."

"I was already passionate about early jazz, mostly bop," he continues, "so I could exist in that environment of emulation up to a point, even revel in it. But the surrealist leanings soon pushed through the wall, so that the solos I did on barjo and jug became increasingly wild. After two and a half years I took up the frontman position and started doing the announcements. Now, with the need to be completely rebellious – and to turn situations on their heads – all of that adds into becoming a solo performer."

"I was a rebellious youth but the other half is that I was a very timid youth," he qualifies. "I don't think it's always in balance, but let's call it a balance, of the extrovert and the introvert. So the introvert is the one that can make structure and compose things, put things together, and the extrovert is the performer who will do... not quite anything to hold the audience, but will get pretty damn close to it."

To learn how to accomplish this, Geesin went back to the jazz clubs as a solo interval act and graduated to playing shows in his own right. A track on his retrospective compilation album *Hysteria*, "No 8 Scalpel Incision Footrot", captures him in full flow. Broadcast live on Radio 1's *Country Meets Folk* in 1969, it was most definitely neither. As a "special guest" on the show, he runs through episodes of dense, untrammelled piano playing, bursts into tracts of Picnic gobbledygook, stamps around the stage crashing cymbals and shouts at the audience, who respond with enthusiasm.

"My performance," Geesin explains, "were always improvised, but with a number of building blocks, some down to the size of a molecule, others like big bricks. But how I would start would vary tremendously; it just depended on the feeling of the moment. Even in 1969, there was a lot of experience behind those statements. It also had to be sharp with some perception in it, not just a bit of nonsense."

The poet and musician Pete Brown recorded his first session with his group, The Real Poetry Band – featuring drummer Laurie Allen and bass player Danny Thompson – in Geesin's Elgin Crescent studio in 1966. By the late 60s they shared the same agent, Blackhill Enterprises, and often appeared on the same bill, during which time he gained an insight into Geesin's methods.

"Ron understood the madness of early jazz," says Brown, "a lot of which was deliberately hyped up; sometimes you got very exaggerated highs and lows, which gave it a funny edge. He would do this hysterical stride piano and strange solo vocals over the top, and he would also blow into a huge petrol can, like a jug effect. He had tremendous affection for all that music, but he sensed the more hysterical end of it. Then he satirised the vaudeville aspect of the barjo by doing insane barjo solos which were musically very inventive. I guess the modern equivalent is someone like Eugene





Chadbourne. He was quite controversial and quite off the top of his head as well, so some stuff would go past people. There was also a tremendous ferocity and probably quite a lot of anger, and if you didn't realise what an incredible humour there could be in there, then you might be scared by it."

Geesin's performances were driven by a deep restlessness, a constant questioning both of his own work and its effect on others. "Where are you coming from, what is the influence, who is the audience, who is the performer, where does this stand, where does that stand?" he asks rhetorically. "There are no absolute boundaries, there are no absolute rules about it. In fact a lot of my performances were about questioning the idea of performer or consumer: Who are you?"

This high risk strategy produced its share of failures, some of them spectacular. By 1973, Geesin's were one of Britain's foremost Progressive rock groups and, looking for an unusual support act to complement their 'arty' image, they invited Geesin along. "The infamous first gig was at Glasgow Apollo, in October 73," he grins. "I thought, 'I'll do a non-entrance tonight'. I went on with a white coat looking like a stagehand or a doctor. The audience got very uneasy and started shouting, and that was it—I'd lost it from the start. I lasted about 20 minutes out of the half hour, torrents of abuse coming from the audience, and the place was in such uproar at the end that Geesin didn't go on."

"The group looked extremely pale when I came off," he laughs. "Even Peter Gabriel under his white make-up. They cancelled the gig and gave everyone their money back. The next night was Manchester and I knew what to do, and I flattered the audience before they had time to move; and the rest of the tour was a great success. I think if I hadn't cracked it on the second night they might have had, shall we say euphemistically, several misgivings. But that's the brinkmanship bit, the living on the edge, which for me was necessary."

Geesin also gained a reputation as a piano wrecker—unfairly, he reckons. True, he would take off the covers and make sculptures with them, or pass them around the audience, but, as he says, "upright pianos were never designed to have full tones with all the covers on, so all that is doing is undoing it ready for reusing". But his percussive technique also threatened to shorten the life expectancy of old pub pianos, which became brittle when dried out from their damp storage conditions.

"If I was giving the piano the full effort," he says, "hammers would just break off and fly over my shoulder—that actually happened. Then my challenge was to be amusing on the piano knowing which notes still work. There was one memorable occasion when I did wreck a piano because it was so bad. I just took handfuls of hammers and pulled them out and said, 'Nobody is going to play this fucking piano again.'"

His idiosyncratic approach helped him break into making music for TV commercials. He recalls a pivotal meeting at the end of a live performance. "I was packing up and this chap came up to me and said, 'I really like your piano playing, would you like to do a headache commercial?' I went for it. The advertising agency and we're doing a Pharsic tablet commercial—'Take the pain out of headaches'—and I think that crashing piano would be quite good."

Thereafter, Geesin worked extensively on recording commercials, theme tunes and incidental music for various TV shows. These evocative miniatures ranged from slyly brass ensembles to wistful overmodulated guitar duets. Unfortunately much of this music has only

been heard by one-off TV audiences—schoolchildren, in the case of 70s educational programmes like Maths Today. He also supplied electronic vignettes to the Keith Prowse Music Library, a selection of which has been released on the albums *Electrosound* and *Electrosound Volume 2* on the library's own KPM label. He first used a set up of two reel-to-reel tape recorders for looping purposes in 1965, eventually customising the machines with an extra arm for holding a longer loop of tape. Using a 'Sufatox' VCS3 synthesizer in conjunction with other instruments and sounds—with tapes looped and running forwards and backwards—he built up patterns which still sound extraordinary today.

By 1969 Geesin had befriended Pink Floyd drummer Nick Mason, and through him met the group's bass guitarist, Roger Waters. They soon progressed from glib opponents to musical collaborators, producing the dazzling soundtrack to Roy Battersby's 1970 film *The Body*. Geesin wrote most of the music, but feels that if the two friends had worked together again they could have achieved something great. The soundtrack is a mosaic of piano-led chamber pieces, massed looped vocal choruses, atmospherics and some of Geesin's frantic playing on mandolin. And infamously, by putting a mic down the toilet pan, he recorded the raw material for the barrage of farting which graces "Our Song". "It was a pun on stereo panning," he smiles. Waters co-produced and clipped in with some acoustic tracks redolent of his songs on Pink Floyd's *More* and *Ummagumma*.

This busy year included Geesin's first major foray into audio-visual work when he provided music for an installation in the British Pavilion at Expo 70 in Osaka, although funds didn't stretch to flying him to Japan. But his greatest exposure came with his work with Pink Floyd on the lengthy title track of *Atom Heart Mother* (1970). He not only arranged but co-composed the piece—"with the absolute minimum of creative suggestions from them", as he is keen to point out. The group recorded the basic tracks and left him to complete them while they went on tour. "It was a month's work stripped to the underpants in a hot padded studio in Ladbroke Grove," he recalls. The 23 minute piece stands as one of Pink Floyd's most adventurous works, not least because of Geesin's inspired brass and choral arrangements, and big cinematic textures. But he is not completely satisfied with the results, and he found the whole episode rather stressful.

"I was about to hit one of the horn players," he confesses. "They were hard EM-type session brass players. That was uncomfortable and I was exhausted from doing the work. I obviously cared a lot about it and I cracked up. I had to hand over to the choirmaster fellow [John Alldis] who conducted the rest of the sessions. But because he was a classical man, he didn't know about pushing the beat, or hot rhythm, and so it's a bit spongy. If I had more experience at the time and got the brass players to give it out, it would be a little edgier, tighter."

The following year Geesin worked on arranging singer/songwriter Bridget St John's *Songs For The Great Man*. This time, top players from the Philharmonia were hired to play his adventurous convolutions of strings and woodwind—and an outstanding arrangement for four trombones. His settings are exquisite. "Listening to that [album again], I should have done more of that stuff at the time," he laments. "Well, maybe I will, but there was a living to be made and that was more films. The things I got into didn't require that intricate, considered work."

Geesin also continued to release solo albums in the 1970s, peaking in 1977 with *Right Through*, a

startling mix of sound dramas, incantations and recitation—with distant echoes of Ivor Cutler and The Goons—and some extended multitracked keyboard and mandolin sections. These are interrupted with chunks of musique concrète and jumpcut editing that in places recall Faust. With Geesin's a dual urge to both create and disrupt structure finding an equilibrium here, you can see why it's one of his personal favourites.

About his own work he can be disarmingly frank. Although he has always resisted chasing an audience, he knows a lot of people will miss out on his independently released albums, and much of his commercial and soundtrack work will be forever unheard. "There's a big dialogue going on within me about whether to have done is at, against the other statement, which is to not have something realised to the maximum is to not have done anything," he states.

In conversation as in his music, Geesin likes to turn ideas on their heads, poke them about and look at them from a number of angles; a process which is entertaining, thought-provoking and at times seems somewhat perverse. A chance purchase of a box of philosophical and spiritual books in a local market helped channel some of this mental activity, the most significant being the Taoist work, *The Importance Of Living* by Lin Yutang.

"One idea is more or less that one of the great achievements one should strive for is total anonymity," he explains. "There is a humorous twinkle in proper Taoism: the balance of that is there's always someone who will come and seek you out because there are those who need to seek out very rare things. It's not just that everything has its own opposite, everything is its own opposite. Everything is upside down as well as right side up. It's serious but you've got to see the humour and I've always been tickled by the absurdity of life. Sometimes it can be self-deprecating. It can be flexing one's tenacity."

Following his music for Expo 70, which accompanied a series of films screened along a curved passageway, Geesin extended the idea that modular musical sources could be effectively 'mixed' as the person walked past in the 'Tune Tube'. This giant construction was illuminated and sonically activated by a participant walking through a network of infrared and ultrasonic sensors. "It was an attempt to draw together the introverted side and the extroverted side," he says. "It was a composition and it uttered as a composition, but it needed a reaction from a human being in real time to make it do anything, and I didn't need to be there."

In the early 90s Geesin extended his interest in the role of the audience when he provided the cough-laced soundtrack for Ian Breckwell's amusing and disturbing installation *Audition*, which reflected an audience back at itself on a giant video screen.

Although far from complacent, Geesin admits that he is less driven than he used to be and although he still plays live occasionally, he has no intention of going back to the days of playing clapped out pianos in pubs. He is also slowing down, he says. Sometimes he wakes up, assesses his mood and decides to have a day off. One time when I call him, he tells me he's enjoying a holiday at home.

"With artists," he says, "I think it's completely essential to undo themselves from time to time and just stop and drain down. An awful lot of human beings forget to do that, but if they didn't do that with their car—put it in a garage for a complete oil change or whatever—it would blow up. I think a lot of people are going around blowing themselves up—at the present time it's got so bad that they're actually doing



it for real. Which also ties in with [Spike] Milligan's perception of things exploding. I'm sure it's all about human beings overheating."

During a break in the interview at Headrest, Geesin takes me on a guided tour of his property. First port of call is a network of workshops, one of which boasts the Spannerium, his collection of restored adjustable wrenches, some dating back to the 13th century. He informs me that that it has doubled in size recently. "I've bought perhaps the only other collection in the country. He called himself a 'Spannorik' but he died, you see, I heard about it and thought, I must get this lot." We then proceed to his studio and offices in a former printworks at the bottom of the garden, where bingos, guitars and mandolins sit in racks above an enormous Fairlight sampler, his ancient VCS3 synth and an Apple Mac.

Although he hasn't released an album of new material since *Bluefuse* a decade ago, Geesin has in that time been involved in a number of audio-visual projects and taken various temporary lecturing and research posts. Then there is what he calls the "big work", *Journey Of A Melody*. He has made over 30 minutes so far, but has plans for it to grow to an hour. "That could be years given the speed that I'm going at the moment," he cooresses. "I've got into a very interesting area which involves weather forecasters all chatting wessy against a huge melody. It's working quite well but it's taking a long while to sculpt. I was collecting all sorts of voices but I've narrowed it down to them because we all know that Britain is obsessed with the weather."

Next on the agenda will be two sister works, *Journey Of A Rhythm* and *Journey Of An Idea*. He also has plans to publish a book, *The Stapled Brain*, collecting his complete writings including his book of poetry, aphorisms and observations, *Fallables*, first published in 1975. I ask him if he thinks that his emergence as an artist in the liberated 1960s – rather than any other era – was in itself significant.

"Now, if that had been in the 1930s, say, I might have been a late dadast or I might have come out as a middle class professional person like an architect," he replies. "I started off for a few weeks in an architect's office and I've got a bit of that visual, design side in me. I think it's a bit like a pile of shit, you got different bugs growing depending on the chemical composition. To me a lot of society and what we encounter in it is like that pile of shit, or manure. It's ennobling, but if you're not the right kind of bug, it will consume you. You will not consume it. I think the advantage that humans have is they can adjust and become a different species of bug in that pile."

Last year Geesin gave up his post of Creative Sound Specialist in Animation at London's Royal College Of Art in order to devote more time to recording. But one of the instructions he gave to his students he now he gives to himself on a regular basis: "You could say that 50 per cent of everything we do is rubbish, you included, me, anyone. But I kept saying, More risk equals more reward. Will you kindly go and risk something. Do something that is extraordinary." □

Right Through... And Beyond is currently available on Headscope. For info on Geesin's projects, go to [www.rongeesin.com](http://www.rongeesin.com) (twog/discog); for recordings go to [www.headscope.co.uk](http://www.headscope.co.uk)

Theatre of the absurd (top to bottom): Ron Geesin matronising a piano, 1967; connoitring around the studio, 1978 and late 70s; the spannerik in his Spannerium, 2003

# Charts

## Playlists from the outer limits

### 15 Low-Cost, Hi-Quality Releases On CD-R Micro-Labels

**Scott Taylor**  
 Publisher ([www.sja.com](http://www.sja.com))  
**Jehovah W Light**  
 Myth ([www.sunnydayrecords.net](http://www.sunnydayrecords.net))  
 Mac/He's Tremble On The Edge  
 Deserts Will Bloom Through Atomic Power  
 www.burninggreppress.tad  
**Chad Dilleid**  
 Express Yourself ([www.carbonrecords.com](http://www.carbonrecords.com))  
**Charles Beaumont Demolition Syndicate**  
 No Green Skies (www.cityrecords.com)  
**Kassia Campbell/Todd**  
 British Steel ([www.craig.com](http://www.craig.com))  
**Marmalade**  
 Rev ([www.marmalade.com](http://www.marmalade.com))  
**Halo Strana**  
 Kerit EP ([www.greenfieldent.com](http://www.greenfieldent.com))  
**Culter**  
 Michel Besset ([www.vivymusic.com/connexions](http://www.vivymusic.com/connexions))  
**Posselt**  
 The Looka Like Live From Here ([www.fencingplatform.org.net](http://www.fencingplatform.org.net))  
**Crowlape**  
 Dogs Begin To Howl, Snakes Begin To Howl  
 www.silkipop.com  
**Frog Pocket**  
 Cars: Ride ([www.frogpocket.com](http://www.frogpocket.com))  
 & www.frogpocket.com  
**Expose Your Eyes**  
 Greatest Hits ([www.lendecordage.com](http://www.lendecordage.com))  
**Nixons Lessons**  
 Rebuilding The Collapse  
 www.vivymusic.com/connexions  
**Razzerite**  
 Mixed America ([www.mindagents.com](http://www.mindagents.com))

Compiled by Robert Taylor, Fencing Platform  
 Recordings, [www.fencingplatform.org.net](http://www.fencingplatform.org.net)

### Mandrake Moon 15

**Carbon Vulture**  
 Methodology 7070 Afro Types (Mute)  
**Various**  
 Ghost: A Compilation Of 29 Short Tracks  
 (DustOnDustMusic)  
**Fred Frith**  
 Guitar Solos (ReR)  
**Charlemagne Palestine**  
 In Mid-Air (Alga Marghera)  
**Aak**  
 Deconstructed (Blue (Disque))  
**Jack Aral**  
 Dance & Mood Music (Routure Universal)  
**Robby Rosenthal & The Freedom Orchestra**  
 Lucifer Rising OST (MCD)  
**LeVissio/family**  
 Intimacy (Jazz)  
**Murphy With Wound**  
 Set-More Gelato (United Dances)  
**Joe Zawinul**  
 Zawinul (Warrick)  
**People Like Us**  
 Stated Live (New Media)  
**Richard Thomas**  
 Shores And Rhythms Abstract Paint (La Recordings)  
**Masami Akita**  
 The Prosperity Of Vice, The Mortality Of Virtue (JRE)  
**Super ESP**  
 The Wisdom Of The East City Council (Hefy)  
**Cicla**  
 Ambient TUMULT

Compiled by Tom Jones and Barry Williams,  
 Field Central, [www.fieldcentral.co.uk](http://www.fieldcentral.co.uk)

### Avoir-Altire 15

**W Werd**  
 Beethovenian Of Vincent (Metadot)  
**The Sea And Cake**  
 Glass (Third Jockey)  
**Various**  
 Branches And Routes (Fat Cat)  
**Sax**  
 Suit (Strawgole)  
**Concort**  
 By The Roads And The Fields (Fat Cat)  
**Radiance**  
 Hat To The Third (Periphrase)  
**Green Amherst & Martin Ng**  
 Vigil (Quadrilateral)  
**Phill Mitchell**  
 Touch Food (Touch)  
**Saxon**  
 Whales (Southern Land)  
**Chris Clark**  
 Demos In The Bomb (Warp)  
**Grasshopper**  
 Sunlight (V2)  
**Chris Wallace**  
 Wasteland Record (Touch)  
**Shkshard Elvers**  
 Polish Breasts Kamen Pencil (Shaubgole)  
**The Loosejaw Organist**  
 Fenne And Pollen (Third Jockey)  
**Ryoji Noda**  
 w- (Touch)

Compiled by Fennek Clench, Avoir-Altire lessee,  
 www.avoir-altire.com

### The Office Ambience

**Rhythm & Sound**  
 The Weaver (Jedig)  
**Nurse With Wound**  
 She And Mr Fall Together In Free Death (Beta-Lactam  
 Ring)  
**John Cale**  
 Hyde/Sapient (SME)  
**Nymia's Basement**  
 Haven's Basement (Lee)  
**Arkhechur**  
 Shout (Jedig)  
**Demare**  
 Sound Murderer (Planet M)  
**Martin Rex**  
 To Love (The 13)  
**Paradise Island**  
 Lives Are Infinitely Few (Dim Mak)  
**Bonny Burgess**  
 Meditations For Piano (Tadpole)  
**TBS-84**  
 Shakes Herd With Danger (File 13)  
**Robert Wyatt**  
 Cuckoo (Jedig)  
**Milton Bateman**  
 Occasional Variations (Tadpole)  
**Bess Ervile**  
 All Crystal Palace (East Ford)  
**Jackie-O Motherfucker**  
 The Magic Fire Music/Wall (All Tomorrow's Parties)  
**Paul Darnall**  
 Salt Baggies (JMR)

Compiled by The Wire Sound System

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, musicians, readers, etc. Email [charts@tinewaves.co.uk](mailto:charts@tinewaves.co.uk)

Left on the short: Free download vinyl (see page 40)



# Reviews



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# Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs, vinyl and singles

**Clive Bell explores a bad, mad, sad world, mapped with melancholy wit on Robert Wyatt's first album in six years**



Asiant gardenier: Robert Wyatt

## **ROBERT WYATT CUCKOO LAND** HARMONIA HCN 468 CD

1997's *Shleep* was rereleased in 2002, but *Cuckoo Land* is Robert Wyatt's first album of the new millennium. The ex-singer and drummer from Soft Machine and Matching Mole lives quietly in Lincolnshire, writing "about one song a year" with his wife, Alfreda Bengie. Ryuichi Sakamoto once said that Wyatt had "the saddest voice in the world", and for those of us who regard him fondly as a member of some kind of British alternative royal family, it's a pleasure to see him credited with 'coronet' on the first track. Presumably that's a typo, because Wyatt plays plenty of cornet and trumpet (his first instrument, childhood violin lessons notwithstanding) throughout *Cuckoo Land* – to lovely melancholy effect on "Old Europe", which is about Juliette Greco and Miles Davis in Paris in 1949. That title's reference to Donald Rumsfeld's anti-French sneering on the eve of the Iraq war is no accident.

Over the last three decades Wyatt has staked out his musical patch by borrowing widely from both jazz and 'beat music'. His 1974 pop hit with The Nomads "I'm A Believer" was an appropriate response to the jazz instrumentalists who got him sacked from Soft Machine. If *Shleep* was a popper, brighter vision than usual, for *Cuckoo Land* Wyatt has nudged the dial back towards jazz. The album is also murkier and more understated. The good news is that

there are classic songs here, some good jokes, gonorous old fashioned harmonica courtesy of Karen Mantler, and yet more proof of Wyatt's amazing ability to write a moving melody about the grimmest of topics without trivialising or patronising them. "Forest" is a rich gush of a song, with a double-layered chorus and Brian Eno joining the choir for the counter-melody. After a couple of listens you'll be singing too, and yet the lyrics deal with World War Two gypsy extermination camps. "Foreign Accents" loops a six word lyric – four of them Japanese – for a nursery rhyme about Israeli nuclear weapons and CIA meddling in Iran. Wyatt has been here before, of course. "East Timor" on 1985's *Old Rottenhat* was minimal, caustic and unforgettable. And those who remember with pleasure *Shleep*'s "Free Will And Testament" (a pop ditty that tackles head-on the limitations of human free will) will enjoy *Cuckoo Land*'s opening track, "Just A Bit", where Wyatt takes on a rich subject: is religious belief a good thing? "Superstition's like religion, borsari version – faintly sad." It's "I'm A Believer" dragged into 2003.

"I'm not a political activist – more an aesthete and self-indulgent piss-artist," Wyatt told *The Guardian* early this year. He says of his voice that it has "ever-decreasing range, now more or less reduced to a wimpy mutter". His self-assessment is a little harsh, for Wyatt can still negotiate the beautiful high melody of "Lullaby For Hamza" (about the bombing of Baghdad) better than any other male vocalist I can think of. The grumpy who speaks out on "Lullaby", a

hilarious complaint about fast walkers and noisy neighbours. But it's true to say that much of the singing is understated, whether from Wyatt or his guest Karen Mantler (Carla Bley's and Mike Mantler's daughter, who contributes three songs). Sometimes the mix swamps the voices a little, a shame given the quality of the lyrics. This problem is not helped by Wyatt's current fondness for a real striker of a synth – a huffing, twinkling breeze of digital halitosis that has been mixed more generously than it deserves.

On the musical plus side there is plenty of sax, clarinet and flute from Israeli exile Gilead Atzmon (formerly of Ian Dury's Blockheads). Also dark, treble trombones from Annie Whitehead, spot-on guitar from Paul Weller on "Lullaby", and Mantler's spine-tingling harmonica. Not to forget Wyatt's drumming, which, like his trumpet, is more in evidence than usual. When the atmosphere threatens to turn dark and glum, Wyatt clears the air with a parlour piano rendition of Buddy Holly's "Raining In My Heart", or a simple duet with Mantler on Carlos Jobim's Brazilian classic, "Insensatez".

Wyatt can justly be proud of this batch. *Shleep* raised the bar very high, but *Cuckoo Land* is a substantial and deeply personal work, with the light touch of a true master. At 75 minutes, it's also a generously long collection, and the boss has thoughtfully included a half-minute break in the middle, "long enough to change the record or put on the kettle". □

# KAORU ABE THE LAST RECORDING

BY ALAN CUMMINGS

If Japan's free jazz mythology has a tragic potency to mirror that of Albert Ayler, Eric Delphy or John Coltrane, it's the bestowing and even faster living alt-life Kaoru Abe, who died in 1978 aged 29. Despite releasing just a few records in his lifetime, since his death the know has been well picked over by Japanese labels like DMP PPS and Tokuma, with each uncharted recording adding to the romantic pall of desecrated genius that had already begun to accumulate around him while he was alive. Jazz theorist, promoter and Ake partizan Akiro Aida, who spokeily died three months after his protégé, did much to sculpt this myth, predicting that the only future open to Abe was "the dark descent into performance or the road to self-destruction".

DMP already released an Abe recording called *Last Days* more than a decade ago, so they must have been appalled to discover a short audience tape dating from the next day and just over a week before Abe's sudden death from a ruptured stomach. But rather than quietly suppress the evidence, they've shamelessly released it. What you get is a mere 16 minutes of sporadically focused solo afts, with none of the guitar, piano or harmonica experiments he also pursued towards the end. Remnants of the blistering speed and voracity of early '70s Abe is still there in his rapid dashes towards the upper register. But once he reaches the peak, at times he sounds lost, not knowing whether to let clutches of squealing overtones or relax back into a wistfully languid melodicism.

If you enjoy reading promotional fluff about musicians' last recordings then pick it up at all means, but beginners will find little here that speaks of Abe's musical genius.

# ACEYALONE LOVE AND HATE

PROJECT BLOWED CD7944922 CD  
BY BOB REVIEWS

Formerly of Freestyle Fellowship, Aceyalone is a prodigiously gifted rapper who has often saddled himself with less accomplished musicians on what sound more like musical grab bags than albums. A *Book Of Human Language* with LA producer Mumbles accepted his fifth solo album *Love And Hate* is no different, even if it has a higher level of strong cuts than its precursor, 2001's *Accepted Eclectics*. Like "The Sage

Confesses", a homage to his longtime crew Project Blowed, on which the rides over Fat Jack's bouncy Cali groove with A-Team partner Abstract Rude. "Moonlit Skies" is a melancholy song fuelled by RJD2's looping of acoustic guitar and Gasperi's haunting background vocals. Held over from The Unbound Project compilation, "Miss America" is a modest treasure produced by Joey Chavez, where Aceyalone reasons: "Life as we know it is about to change/You smell it within the air/The weather is getting strange/Drugged up, addicted and numb from the pain/The sickness in America has spread to her veins".

Vocals are mostly contributed there radically contrasting styles, leaving Aceyalone's raps as the album's only consistent factor. But sadly few of his spels impress solely on the strength of their content. Notable exceptions include "Miss America" and the title track, which spins around Rodei Raheem's "love and hate" speech from the Spike Lee film *Do the Right Thing* (which, in true hip-hop fashion, was lifted from Robert Michael's preacher killer in *Night Of The Hunter*). If words fail him, Aceyalone's not about to let their failure hinder some virtuosic displays of rap dexterity on tracks like "Junkman", where he skips words in time to the music like he is mimicking his riddim beat. But anyone still hoping for a worthy sequel to *A Book Of Human Language* will have to wait a little longer.

# BEINS/DAVIES/WASTELL SURFACE/PLANE

MENISCUS MUSIC0219 CD  
BY DAN WABURTON

Also known as The Sealed Knot, this trio of Berlin percussionists Burkhard Beins (Phosphor), Perimond with London bassist Roderic Davies and cellist Mark Wastell (*Assumed Possibilities*, *Broken Consort*), are enthusiastic champions of lowcase improv but listeners coming to *Surface/Plane* expecting a collection of isolated notes and plinks amid long pregnant pauses are in for a severe shock with these two extended improvisations, recorded in 2001.

Wastell describes his approach as resolutely "anti-idea", and Davies's numerous preparations include jamming metal plates between his hand strings à la Bobanberguer's Donald Miller. In the tape's 22 he even went as far as describing Sealed Knot music as "post-industrial", a notion subsequently developed in the austere electronic title track of his recent solo album *Ten* (Confront). Beins, a self-taught percussionist who came to improvisation in 1988 after years of

experimentation with tape collage, is the perfect foil for the glinty scrapings of the UK conglomera's stringed instruments.

"Surface" comes from a concert at West London's All Angels church, where Davies and Wastell curated a series of exceptional improvised music concerts during 2001, while "Plane" was recorded a day earlier at St Paul's Hall, Huddersfield. There's nothing reduced about the way the sounds the trio produce resonate in these spaces, which imbue the music with the aura of abandoned warehouses and desolate wilderness. In fact pieces they consciously set out to avoid the lingua franca of repetitive chatter, proposing instead a slower heartbeat to attain the group's goal of "opening up the full range of sonic possibilities with focused intensity and concentration". Mission accomplished.

# BITING TONGUES AFTER THE CLOCK: RETROSPECTIVE 1980-89

BY DAVID STUBBS

The recent live reunion of 80s avant-funksters Biting Tongues' classic line-up was an unerring reminder of the intense wattage they generated onstage. This collection is only as unerringly electrifying as their live work but it's still an essential document, not to mention respect to those poor historians who circulate 1980s music as all poodle-haired hedonism and deli Goth, attributing set the sort of barroom and exhilarating undercurrent of which Biting Tongues, among others, were a part.

Formed in 1979 to provide a soundtrack for the film from which they took their name, Biting Tongues made their album debut two years later with *Don't Heal*. Although, as the track skeletons confirm, it turned out slightly damp and flat in places, thanks to the 70s studio predilection for muffled, over-paneled "dead rooms", Biting Tongues at least got to set out their stall. Obsessed with processed, scrambled and cut-up texts, vocalists (and current Wire contributor) Ken Hollings would deliver as terse, using sparse, grim collages of imagery, which impinged on and tore through the fabric of the music's waxy addendum and disorienting events tear through the quilt of everyday life. *Don't Heal* was recorded in quick time to the random accompaniment of types of found sounds, superimposing another layer of chance.

Meanwhile, the group were picking other things out of the air: the way Howard Walmisley's tenor

saw evoked the howling, preening, eternal spirit of 60s free jazz loosely aligned them with contemporaries like James Chance, Bart's Ted Milton, Cabaret Voltaire and Clock DVA, as did their inverted use of funk Biting Tongues retained its structures and rhythms but replaced funkbedom with a more grizzly bedobed in keeping with the time, uncertain times.

What distinguished Biting Tongues, however, was future 80s Statesman Graham Massey's multi-instrumental virtuosity on guitar, clarinet, violin and keyboards, plus the group's determination to fly by the seat of their collective pants. With 1981's *Love It*, they had also learned to embellish their sound by whatever means necessary – the quirky, rising and falling metallic effect of "Demented Beach" is sourced from a wash tank, while "Det For 485" achieves its contemporary-sounding blip effect by the simple expedient of clapping.

The group reached a zenith with 1982's *Northern Lights and Labyrinth*, from which the wailing "Hydrophone" and the immortal "Aar Car" are taken. Not unlike Peter Dinklage, "44" posits a stark existential condition no one would ever think to contemplate now: "I sleep alone now/I sleep on boards/I see the highway/But I don't have".

After Hollings left in 1984 and a number of personnel changes, Biting Tongues' progress faltered. By the mid 80s they were highly proficient but lacking a context. With "Double Gold St Paul", they were effectively functioning as a chrysalis for Massey's 80s State.

# BONOB0 DIAL "M" FOR MONKEY

NINJA TUNE 2670000 CD

BY DAVID MANDL

The Bonobo is a species of notoriously horny primate able to the clump, which engages in group sex and various non-reproductive sexual practices regularly and with astonishing frequency. That's quite a reputation to live up to for anyone adopting the animal's moniker as his nom de guerre. On sensual if not sexual grounds, this record released by the artist known as Bonobo – Brighton's multi-instrumentalist/DJ Simon Green – passes the test. The downbeat soundscapes of *Dial "M" For Monkey* are ideal for lustrating or indulging in bliss.

Monkey is a scintillating interweave of soft-edged energy, early 70s soul-jazz samples and hundreds of delicate yet perfect textures – a well-placed single piano note; a gentle cascade

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**Ken Hollings applauds as Kraftwerk cross the finishing line with their first album of new material in 17 years**



Welcome to the velodrome: Kraftwerk

**KRAFTWERK  
TOUR DE FRANCE SOUNDTRACKS**  
(MCA KWS CD)

Whether you consider it a technologically outmoded manifestation of 'Old Europe' left over from the previous century, a pointless mass exertion or a dazzling restatement of the relationship between man and machine, a new Kraftwerk album is never going to be an easy proposition. Meanwhile the Tour De France goes from strength to strength, the gruelling month-long cycle race having just celebrated its centenary.

This year also marks the 20th anniversary of Kraftwerk's original "Tour De France", a one-off 12" that originally looked like little more than a rather troubled cross between corporate anthem and the coded expression of a personal foible, reflecting motivating members Ralf Hütter's and Florian Schneider's obsession with cycling. Recently reissued in a new high performance version, "Tour De France" prompted a lot of nervous backward glances this summer, particularly when it was announced that the single trailed a much larger work dedicated to the same theme. A pleasant enough piece in itself, "Tour De France" never really appeared to lead anywhere. It wasn't, for example, included on *The Mix*, Kraftwerk's 90s digital reworking of previous career highlights. Now, however, it has been endowed with all the complex allure of a previously unrealised project, a suspended work in progress that leaves you wondering why Hütter and Schneider took so long to get around to completing it.

Despite their reputation for conceptual distance, Kraftwerk have always been attracted to the grand public spectacle. From celebrating Europe's motorway and rail networks to playing at the UK Tribal Gathering and composing the official theme for Moscow's Expo 2000, the problematic exchange between crowds and power has always formed a key part of their work. *Tour De France Soundtracks* is consequently less about cycling than it is about the relationship between extreme physical endurance and technology, between individual participation and its representation through the media network. The project itself divides roughly into two parts, the first of which is an extended suite taking the listener through three 'stages' of the race to an accompaniment of driving rhythms, panoramic melody lines and the incessant clicking of spokes and gears. Against this setting, a mixture of human and computer generated voices provides a dispassionate commentary, laconically noting amid the scenery and spectators the constant presence of news and information technology, thereby reconfiguring the entire event into one gigantic data flow. Even allowing for personal expectations, this sequence rates a mention alongside such 1970s Kraftwerk classics as *Trans Europe Express* and *Autobahn*, if only for the icy conceptual irony that lies hidden within it.

A more general theme links the individual tracks that make up the remainder of the album, transforming this second part of the project into an abstract study on the dynamic interaction between human and machine performance. Opening with the vibrant

clanging of "vitamin" and the abrasive sensual funk of "Aero Dynamik", this section is less concerned with the actual race itself than with individual related issues. The body's physical shape and energy consumption are counterpoised with mechanical design and engineering specifications, the two brought together in the deep exhalations and robotic thumping heartbeats that introduce "Elektro Kardogramm", a deadpan dancerlike joke that contains echoes of their 1981 hit "Pocket Calculator". Coming on like a medical procedure spliced into a dance routine, this piece in particular suggests the old men are back, their sense of humour intact.

Considering that the lyrical content of the entire album comprises little more than an impassive listing of nouns and adjectives, with hardly a verb in evidence, it's remarkable how much is conveyed. By way of a summation to the entire project, "La Forme" offers a programme for the disciplined expenditure of energy before winding down into the contemplative "Regeneration". This only leaves the retooled version of "Tour De France" to bring up the rear as a quietly assertive coda, underscoring just how far Kraftwerk have taken both its lyrical content and premise. *Tour De France Soundtracks* may have been a long time coming, but as Kraftwerk's first attempt at a full length CD release – as opposed to a vinyl album – it clocks in at just over 57 minutes and displays more intellectual rigour, subtle discipline and attention to detail than many of their younger contemporaries can ever dream of attaining. □



of handbells; and so on. Green's reverts shift from vintage Quincy Jones cop show themes to sun-baked SoCal funk blues to star-fied take hippy film music, all driven by snappy treebeats. Good, atmospheric organ washes and a heartily vented electric piano that recalls Chick Corea circa 1972 set the mood, with a vast range of percussion sounds providing punctuation. On "D Song," Green effectively follows its short gamelan style introduction with an arrangement for kalimba and an assortment of chimes. A frequently heard nylon string guitar further underlines Moore's organic bent.

That said, much of Green's music is unashamedly onerous. On "Something For Windy," a barely audible whether placed somewhere in the wings could be straight out of a Spaghetti Western soundtrack tutor; with its lurid guitar harmonies and rock'n'low-watt, staccato, "Fluter" recalls any number of B-movie party scenes. Meanwhile, an unusually bluesy chord progression, descending guitar arpeggio and late-night alto sax solo mark out "Nothing Owed" as the disc's belated.

#### DAVID BYRNE LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION THRILL JOCKEY THRILL135 CD BY CLIVE BELL

This is a rare excursion into film music for ex-Talking Head David Byrne, and possibly his first soundtrack release since his own movie *True Stories* (1986). The film in question is the Scottish erotic noir thriller *Young Adam*, directed by David Mackenzie, and starring Ewan McGregor, Tilda Swinton and Peter Mullan as the two locked in damp existential struggle aboard a canal barge between Glasgow and Edinburgh. The original book is a cult classic from the 1950s, written by heroin-addicted Dymphna Press pornographer Alexander Trocchi. The film opened the Edinburgh Film Festival in August, and is released in the UK this month.

Byrne has done a tidy, if not tentily exciting job on the soundtrack. Celtic melodies set over muffled drums, string bass and electric piano. Dominant ambience is generated from metallic squeals, like train carriages grinding rails. The strange background colours are "Lacks and Barges" are more interesting than the banal celestine played upfront. It's unlikely anyone would identify this as Byrne's work in a blindfold test, but the anonymity is deliberate. His aim, he says, was to make the music almost invisible so it blends into

the film's world. Hardly a job for his trademark curvy pop melodies and skewed arrangements. Members of Mogwai, The Dølgos, Remcondi and Belle & Sebastian make discreet contributions, but the real stars are the string section. Though they're not given anything striking to do, they do it extremely well, creating a sleek sheen rather than an earthy, gritty surface.

Byrne is least at home when writing jazz. Compared to David Lynch's much finer use of threatening ambience and jazz madness, the tenor and baritone sax section on "Haitian Fight Song" here sounds woefully weak. Byrne is on more familiar ground with the loopy melancholy of the closing song, "The Great Western Road".

#### JOHN CAGE THE PIANO WORKS 5 MODE 123 CD BY TOM PERCHARD

Here are some truly minor piano works to add to Mode's complete Cage edition. *Three Easy Pieces* is a collection of genteel composition exercises by the 21-year old composer, the best of which is a Bach pastiche. *Six Organs* (1944) is a Birtch-like three-minute dance for solo piano, and is stitched together from the album's centrepiece, the "dance play" *Four Walls*. That production marked one of his first collaborations with choreographer Merce Cunningham. Directed to make the score easily performable, Cage largely confines the music to the piano's white notes, and so, as a result, reluctantly piece—Cage architect Don Gillespie mixes it to Cage's split with wife Xenia Kashevaroff—the music almost inevitably recalls Debussy at his pianest.

But no matter how emotional its subtlety, and indeed the drama's evident Ewarting-like bleakness), Cage's predisposition towards inexpressive overtones any impulse towards formal lyricism. Instead, the hominoid modernism that characterises his early work increasingly intrudes, with metrical proportions structuring the music at its smallest and largest levels, repeated blocks consisting of little more than rhythmic punctuation inside with scraps of more melodramatic melodic material throughout its hour-long duration. Pianist Hayley Schwartz gets as much from the music as anyone could.

Without the dance or most of the text—the only surviving fragment of which is sung here by Jack Bruce—the piece is utterly blank and. Cage's, cannot, an outstretched reference to the rest of Cage's work, it's empty of musical interest. Belonging with his most conventionally "musical"

work, it's a good indication of why he didn't write more. Cage heard with a tonal tin ear and wrote with a structural dead hand. But he knew what he was about, and he only allowed it into circulation in the 1980s. By that time, and in contrast of his later work, the piece had taken on a conceptual identity by virtue of its expressive musicality. The vaguest passer had struck again.

#### GRAHAM COLLIER CHARLES RIVER FRAGMENTS JAZZPRT JPPV121 CD GRAHAM COLLIER & THE DANISH RADIO JAZZ ORCHESTRA WINTER ORANGES JAZZPRT JPPV126 CD

#### GRAHAM COLLIER & THE COLLECTIVE BREAD AND CIRCUSES JAZZPRT 131 CD BY JULIAN COWLEY

Reissues of Graham Collier's albums from the late 60s and early 70s provide a reminder of the beset and composer's consistently imaginative contribution to the more adventurous end of the British jazz scene. His last on *Down Another Road* (1969) included trombonist Nick Evans, pianist/obscure Stan Salzman and trumpeter Harry Beckett and you had a group to reckon with. Collier supplied music to match. Beckett made further classy contributions to Collier's *Songs For My Father* (1970) and the live album *Moscos* (1970) (Discofonie). Collier chose his personnel shrewdly.

The current batch offers a selection of his big band compositions, released by three ensembles. Collier's stint as jazz educator spawned the impressive *Loose Tubes*, an ensemble that threw off the self-effacing tendency that has bedevilled too much British jazz. If Collier's own big group work is not flamboyant, maturity and precision carry over any other attractions.

Collier's *River Fragments*, a performance from the 1994 London Jazz Festival, was previously released on the Bootlegue label. Its dedications are trumpeter Herb Pomeroy, one of Collier's own teachers, and Charles Mingus, an abiding model as bassist and composer. Just as Mike Westbrook's large-scale compositions show him steeped in Duke Ellington rather than overly intimate, Collier's debt to Mingus is more in outlook than method. After a neat preliminary

"The Hackney Five", "Fragments" unfolds for nearly an hour, boasting expansive organisation of materials and arrangements held in shape by well-directed solos, with saxophonist Art Themen making an especially velvety contribution.

The title *Winter Oranges* marks Collier's decision to make an *Andalusia*. The music is the culmination of his productive relationship with the enterprising Danish Radio Jazz Orchestra, an adaptable outfit combining technical polish with a real fond of energy. Two of Collier's attractive "Three Simple Pieces" open this 2000 concert recording, followed by the "Winter Dances" suite, a structurally mobile exploration of collective shape, mass and texture, with options for opening out solo space. It might be an uneven work, with some sections slackening momentum, but more than polish, Collier is after the real-time vitality of jazz musicianship, and mostly The DRJO delivers.

Two compositions are presented on *Bread And Circuses*: the title piece and "Dinard Palms", both recorded in Perth, Western Australia, in September 2001. With The Collective, a local mixed ensemble of strings, horns, piano and percussion. From the brooding atmosphere that serves as introduction to the title track to the fused ballad and blues form that closes the CD, The Collective display the improvisatory know-how to breathe life into Collier's scores and guidelines. Pace and mood change regularly, sometimes dramatically, textures grow dense then thin for solacing. This is arguably the most consistently satisfying record of the three, but all bring back and cover a lot of ground, even if they lack the freshness of his early work.

#### TONY CONRAD FANTASY GLISSANDO TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS 82 LP BY BRIAN MORTON

Number 82 in Mendelsohn's great periodic table of the elements is Pb or lead, but there's nothing remotely leaden about this valuable reissue, produced in 1999 from Ben Conrad's analog recording and released as part of the current Audio Artisan series. As a listening experience, it's less compelling than Table Of The Elements' recent *Early Minimalism: Volume 1*, though its historical importance outweighs it. Whether or not Conrad was the only beguiler of the Eternal Music philosophy — there are well-attested counterclaims from former associates La Monte Young and John Cale — scarcely matters now. Conrad narrowly avoided pop

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DAVID BYRNE





# Ian Penman relives the rites and times of Coil, on the road to who knows where

Proud to be ferri: Coil live at London Royal Festival Hall, March 2000

- COIL**  
**COIL LIVE ONE: LONDON AND BARCELONA SPRING 2000**  
 THRESHOLD HOUSE LO00CD#19 2000  
**COIL LIVE TWO: MOSCOW AUTUMN 2001**  
 THRESHOLD HOUSE LO00CD#19 2002  
**COIL LIVE THREE: BOLOGNA SPRING 2002**  
 THRESHOLD HOUSE LO00CD#19 2002  
**COIL LIVE FOUR: PRAGUE/VIENNA AUTUMN 2002**  
 THRESHOLD HOUSE LO00CD#19 2002

Four different Coils, to begin with. Well, I declare: I am in situ on one of these heavy CDs and in heavenly spirit on all four releases, which cover two and a half years of performance whittled down to these five or six nights of coiled gaudy.

They could have made this four or five Coils in a box: could have pared these 33 or 34 or 35 tracks down into a Best Of – a track here, a track there, the ‘best’ realised, reorded, received, instead: an apocalypse, in four or five shts, all alone in the 21st century, the two or four or six or eight of them, and all of us in (at) the wake, who when younger assumed that all 21st-century performances would be something like this: commingled improvisation intense and dare, equal parts Erasure and Samuel Delaney, MCS and WSB, Lenny Bruce goes to Venus, Stockhausen goes House cruising, S&M and psi-fi music & PANdromy via Pasolini and LSD for the eye and Sun Ra as dads and Sonny & Cher & Wicked Uncle Crowley and all.

And you’re thinking: he could just go on making that list until the time of time – and you’re right. But only because Coil set out to encompass a world or two times infinity; while even the best pop or improv or crackle these days seems content to stay – or at best stray meekly – within the parameters of its own formal game: either pop industrial or avant local.

Coil dare otherwise: which makes what you hear (or fear you might) here by turns heartbreasting, noble, haunted, shredded, unearthly, sick, ferocious, higher, faster, arisal blooded, regally green and awfully blue but... never shallow and never, ‘Oh shrug second best!’ do just plug it in twiddle the knob dsh it out don’t look back because time is gaining on us all... If the true – and truly queer – hopes of modernism

died before most of us were even born, Coil here were trying to reconceive the Aquanian child, a pawprint for the future, through the ‘industrial’ use of sound as something like Live as piercingly sensorious ritual. A multithread polyphonic hex upon an increasingly widespread – ingrained and ground down, shallow and cellous – pop materialism which says your desires no longer matter. That world ended a long time ago, foolish children. The destruction ‘underground’ doesn’t really hold or count as meaningful here, when the ‘ground’ is so barren, and because if only one wide open child or cynical lost soul hears and is reawakened or transformed by Coil’s nsky show business, the game has been worth the gambol. And it is a game, albeit a profanely sacred one. No one who attended any of the four singularly different 00-02 sets of Coil (like the same Tarot painted by four different visionaries) will ever forget them.

You need to find a place to replay these tiny silver discs LOUD enough, and you need to give them due time, for ‘live’ performance these take a lot of listening in to, far more veiled and layered than we have any rite to expect. There is the experience of seeing Coil live – all the smoke and mirrors, symbols and messages, straps and clips in multimedia circulation... and then there is later, now, and how concentrated hearing can render you amazed all over again at just how delicate, demonic, brutal, tender their living sound (conjured, improvised and navigated by Peter Christopherson, Simon Norris and Thghpaulsandra, plus a caravansera of variegated Others) can be. Four different planes travelled through: instrumental elves, exorcist stumtrops, incredible string band, bleak magi. Comes down to it, most

‘Live!’ products are 96 per cent dead matter by folks who’ve already given up the ghost, whereas these four or five trips take time to travel, to unravel and space out, so that even a coiled fanimal like me can be taken by spellbound surprise at how these Panic hymns unfold; just how much is hidden and threaded and needs to be taken at its own speed, as it comes to term, a thrashing mewling sobbing LIVING thing.

So: not only four differently ordered ‘sets’, thematic modes, but within that, each night a different mood, for each new topographic drift – which, when the itinerary includes Barcelona, Bologna, Moscow and

Prague, you hardly need me to join the historical dots or draw thick lines in blood or sperm or speed or shrooms through such psychogeography: between hedges and beaches and barricades of red and black, sun and blood, blue of noon and fall of flag. Even I was thrown by just how moving much of this is; just how extreme vocalist John Balance allows himself to become. Ritual transformations – knives in the blood, Go signs for eyelids. Mummurous, self-murderous, sociological, wistful wastrel, to full blown warmonger on the consumerist daymare, some of these performances scared me, and some scare me still, and some remain truly, troublingly sacred for me, and I’m not sure how many things I can say that about even, after half a lifetime of Live. Coil breach the last taboo – they’re not afraid to be nakedly sincere in public; they seem dressed in moon boots and sun fur, but are pearl diving down through to the lowest drifts of High Music, high in every sense, high for very sense, a series of choruses which are also hi and to insensations of noise, loud screaming, and, most of all, naked offerings of LOVE. It’s up to you how much to take or return to the flame of their potpash. Among other zings, version Four of ‘Amethyst Deceivers’ puts a tear in my eye; and ‘Ostia’ nips a tear in my I. ‘Difficult things are happening... in life,’ says Balance here, on or at a late stage. It is genuinely moving.

Coil’s work of commemoration and ESP and glamour and queering (‘What kind of animal are you?’) and collective becoming is – in this mean mean time, this shallow-grave new world, this tired new century – just truly, securely, insanely without equal. Seriously playful and preposterously serious. The four versions of ‘Amethyst Deceivers’, for example, ask something like: What kind of future do you see? Everything that matters is worked out across the circumscribing library of these four black books full of silver light. (Consumer NB for non-fanciers and/or the cash poor: start with Lives One and Four.) But now time is running out as it always does and all the 9000 other words and 33 pertinent details I scratched out of my mnemonic heart will have to wait until we reconvene, ‘where the desert roses bloom and grow’. But in the mean time... ‘We were Coil. Thank you for coming.’ ☐

stardom as a member of The Primitives; Los Read wrote their only single "Do the Ostrich", and Tony returned the favour by lending Los a copy of Leopold von Sachs-Masoch, from which the whole "Venus In Fun" sound developed. His own work moved in a more elemental direction.

Favorite Glosade was realized in December 1989. Technically, it is a rising stereo-phase tone produced on a sine-wave oscillator and recorded on a Revex reel to read using head gap delay. The LP includes the original track and three "jazzers"—closer to Cage collaborations than the current murky aesthetic—using the same pump circuit. Each process is a palimpsest, overlaid over the previous one and adding new texture and detail. However, the original glosade is nothing like its pure and unadorned as the bare tone might suggest, since the relatively primitive equipment introduces an element of wow and crackle, and a measure of tonal ambiguity that is increased exponentially in subsequent versions.

By the end of process three, the original tone is all but lost. The effect is evocatively gular, reminiscent of Goya's great abstract masterpiece *Red Engulfed By Sand*, where the unheard howl is gradually submerged and the sense of anything organic, let alone human, lost in a mineral tide. The great beauty of having this music on vinyl is that the sound texture will continue to evolve as surface noise and variable deck speeds contribute to a further indeterminate processing.

Anyone who has cobbled with Conna's Dream Syndicate or Theater Of Eternal Music output will be fascinated by this LP. And remember: he's the man who taught Mercury Rev all they know.

## CULPER RING

355

NEUROTROPI 01 CD

BY NICK SOUTHGATE

Culper Ring are a solo project of Kris Fors (Amber Asylum), Mason Jones (Suburban Space and devoted scenester and documenter), and Steve Van Til (Neuhaus, Tribes Of Nuere). The album is constructed from three intense all day sessions spread over four years. Away from their laundry list of other jobs, Culper Ring succumbs to the side projects allowing freedom to do things to suit themselves. 355 consists of eight numbered, but unnamed, tracks. Each track of detail is symptomatic of its ultimately secondary nature. The music consists of atmospheric riffs, from

guitar and violin, supplemented by background sound effects and occasionally whispered, muffled or distorted vocals—all standard issue methods for creating haunting soundtracks and melancholy soundscapes. The familiarity of its elements wouldn't matter if any of the tracks contained sufficient ideas to combine them in novel or provocative ways. But the brevity of the side-project worked against any such ideas being developed. Consequently the stark, repeating guitar riffs, samples evocative of early rhyms and black moors, and brooding and threatening vocals create an all too familiar soundtrack for a non-existent horror movie. Shame it's not a horror movie for a soundtrack that doesn't exist.

## KEVIN DRUMM

LAND OF LURCHES

HANSON NHT04 CD

BY MARC MASTERS

Kevin Drumm's last album, the Metal-coated *Sheer Hellish Magma* (Mago), was rightly praised as the summing peak in his already stellar discography. Any notion that Drumm would have to back down from that disc's aural extreme is quickly demolished by *Land Of Lurches*. Its bruising nakedness make it his most aggressive set to date.

By now, Drumm's dense, white-hot drone sound is so natural it seems to seep from his pores. The first of the CD's three unified tracks fits in and out of an obsessive fog of guitar screech, whose only constant is a chopping pulse that sounds like an army of dying helicopters endlessly struggling to lift off. Drumm's aping guitar screeches guitars as it screeches, like snapper-dipper in katon, painfully rubbing one's eyes down to a raw, throbbing core. The closing track is like a shivering ghost of the first, both of them all but unrecognizable on first encounter, but subsequent listens encourage obsessive exploration, to the point where neither feels nearly long enough.

That said, the CD's masterpiece is its shortest track, a gurgling mass of glitchy sound sourced made solely from Drumm's voice recorded into a synthesizer. Like a basement acrobat, Drumm adds or peels off layers of processed screams. His creation slowly stumbling with the rocky step of a robot learning to walk to a twisted beat, its enduring first steps leave you in a state of anticipation for Drumm's next creation that's as deliciously unbearable as his violently addictive music.

## EUROPA 51

ABSTRACTIONS

LO RECORDINGS L00896 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

Stereo's 51st rhythm section, the excellent Andy Ramsey and Simon Johns, are the prime movers on this 32 minute EP which also contains the 25 minute romantic comedy film *Top Ten Of Everything*. As of its nine tracks make up the soundtrack of this film.

Europe 51's gift includes some furniture and fittings we recognise from the Stereo's house. A heavy clatter and string section on "Reclaim Of The Huson" emerges from that corner of the imagination where Finnish films lie. The sparsely centring rhythms of the track titled "Europe 51", with brass crescendos and vibraphone melody, echo Stereo's last album, *Sound Duct*. In fact, it's nicely written for two French horns and drums, lightly scattered over a bed of drums, bass and strummed guitar. However, the music overall is fluffier and foggier than their Lab colleagues might tolerate. At times it's as if a couple of good of Southern boys had inexplicably stumbled into the studio, carrying banjo and slide guitar. "Tree Range Cowan" is particularly smitten with bluesy bango, and has no quibbles about allowing trombones and clarinet to trade licks in a trad jazz playlist. "The Society For The Prevention Of Non Music" backs an Irish bit while with accordion. Though it's pretty and doesn't amount to very much, you could argue it's part of a process of reclaiming lost music from fields of other musicians to do what they please with it.

The album is dedicated to Mary Hansen, the Stereo's vocalist who died late last year. Hansen sang on two of the best tracks, including the innocent, sunny song on a swing, "Four Steps In The Sun". *Abstractions* is a likeable, cheerful mini-album of intelligent light music. But, a little too tidy for its own good, it has opted to playfully offer a few folk genres rather than generate much musical mystery.

## FENNESZ LIVE IN JAPAN

HISID COLUMBIA MS210 CD

BY JOHN MURPHY

Running parallel to his excursions on the international improvisers' circuit, Christian Fennesz is also developing a career as laptop abstractist of choice for more orthodox musicians. First he turns up applying torture to David Sylvian's recent return to form, *Strains*.

Next, he's set to work with Sparkhorse, arguably one of the more open-minded outfits to have emerged from the alt. Country boom in the mid-90s.

Listening to Fennesz's latest solo release, *Live In Japan*, it's easy to hear why he has become so popular. Essentially, he offers all the puzzles and adventures of experimental music—but with a more accessible grasp of melody—and a permanent role for the guitar—that meet of his Venetian contemporaries.

Live in Japan is a new piece, around 40 minutes long, recorded at the Shibuya Nest, Tokyo, this February. The sound, though, will be familiar to fans of Endless Summer, his studio album from 2001: vast fields of soft edged static; weaving symphonic drapes; fragments of babbling guitar melody; unrestrained digital editing that, at odds with many of the contemporaries, enhances the aesthetic qualities of his music rather than subverting them.

The last, especially, is critical to Fennesz's appeal. Rather than succumbing to the multiple disruptive possibilities of improvis, Live in Japan evolves seamlessly from an opening burst of genuine noise towards lucid restoration. As a result, it often recalls a canyon update of the bliss-out chapter of avant rock—My Bloody Valentine circa "Too Much Time", AR Kane, perhaps even The Cocteau Twins—as much as it does to most obvious contemporaries like Phishman. The result is quite lovely, and oddly radical in the way Fennesz manipulates pop and rock cliché with affection rather than self-consciousness. Of course, he's not aware to pranks, as the two Fenn O'Bag CDs with Jim O'Rourke and Peter Rehberg testify, but when he revisits the watery whies and smudged harmonies of "Caecilia" from *Endless Summer*—which is more reminiscent of The Beach Boys than his cover of their "Don't Talk (Put Your Head On My Shoulder)"—as an encore, what's most striking is the unashamed sentimentality which underpins it. The press release claims the show "has been pecked by many as the greatest laptop live show in music history". That's a big call, but it's hard right now to imagine one that could be more engaging.

## FRIENDS FOREVER

KILLBALL

LONG 546 CD

BY MARC MASTERS

Denver's Friends Forever are a concept group, or at least, a group that likes concepts. Some of

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In the 30 years since he headed south to Tokyo, the north Japanese soulman Kazuki Tomokawa has amassed a formidable body of work scarred by his life as a poet, day labourer, improviser and tipster. By Alan Cummings



In full cry: Kazuki Tomokawa

# KAZUKI TOMOKAWA BOX

PSF PSFD136/147 139CD

Hearing idiosyncratic Japanese singer/songwriter Kazuki Tomokawa for the first time more than a decade ago in Tokyo was one of those moments of pure musical epiphany rare in a lifetime. A wiry middle-aged Japanese man, handsome in a vaguely dissolute way, neck tendons taut, and bent double over his acoustic guitar, strummed with a force manic enough to snap strings while howling out lyrics rich in puzzling imagery, yet delivered as an unconscious cry of anguish ripped from an uncomprehending throat. Between songs Tomokawa passed the guitar to people in the front row to practise or tune it, as he downed pint glasses of whisky and water, or rummaged in his satchel for decades-old songs, all the while regaling listeners with stories of his alternative lives as a day labourer on Tokyo building sites, actor, poet, artist and, more recently, successful cycle race pundit. He told these tales in a thick north country brogue rarely heard in a city that habitually stripped its immigrants of their native voices. Here was an antidote to mainstream J-pop, an 'authentic' Japanese singer who existed in a self-created dimension, able to awaken language's innate musicality, and, even more unusually, transmit a message with the power to transcend linguistic boundaries. His message is finally breaking beyond Japan's shores, going by his rapturously received overseas debut at Stirling's Le Weekend festival in Scotland earlier this year, and the Tomokawa cover performed by proselytising fans Damon & Naomi at the same event.

This gorgeously produced, weighty Box documents primarily the nine studio albums that Tomokawa recorded for Tokyo underground label PSF from 1993 onwards. Also included are two new studio albums, named *Satoru* after his brother, a disc of starkly intimate musical settings for texts by a 1930s symbolist poet, the Rimbaud-influenced Chuya Nakahara; and Tomokawa's last major label release, 1986's *Muzan No Bi* (*Beauty Without Mercy*), a beautifully

melancholy distillation of his earlier themes; death and the stubborn, bewildering power of the life force. Just to remind listeners that he has been around for longer, a compilation of his earliest songs from 1975-77 completes the Box. Over 30 years he has amassed a body of work that dazzles with its rare thematic and musical consistency, its inner light untainted by Japan's group-think and oppressive cultural conformity.

Tomokawa emerged out of the radical protest folk movement that blossomed in late 1960s Japan, supported by a loose alliance of urban intellectuals, disgruntled farmers, student radicals and assorted refuseniks. Down to its taste in dungarees, many aspects of the Japanese folk boom were imported or adapted from America. Just as their US brothers and sisters took up the cause of the civil rights movement, for example, so Japanese singers protested against the oppression of Japan's traditional burakumin underclass. But vicious internal feuding and a state clampdown fractured forever the counterculture's unity at the start of the 1970s. In the aftermath a handful of singer/songwriters, Tomokawa among them, turned away from direct protest to explore an infinitely more confusing internal world.

This inner exile befitted Tomokawa's early career as a poet selling his own odes on Kawasaki street corners, before he started setting them to music. His central 'life and death' theme was established early on in songs about loss of those close to him, such as the harrowing 'Ojocha' ('Grandad'), which documents a fevered train ride back north to the deathbed of his beloved grandfather, and the title track on *Muzan No Bi*, a rhythmically urgent poem to his brother Satoru, who committed suicide at a level crossing. On the latter, Tomokawa's words tumble out as though shouted through the night in the seconds before impact.

The alchemical power of art to give definition and succour to life in the face of death is a recurring preoccupation, with Tomokawa recurring to a personal pantheon of marginal visionaries, among them hallucinatory French painters Odilon Redon and Maurice Utrillo; teen murderer cum death row poet

Norio Nagayama; Spanish film maker Victor Erice (director of *Spirit Of The Beehive*); and Buddhist priest turned haiku poet Kenshin Sumitoku, whose unorthodox verse vividly captured life on a terminal cancer ward. But the obscure symbolist poet Chuya Nakahara is the inspiration that Tomokawa has returned to religiously throughout his career. The attraction is clear - Nakahara transcended the confines of poetry's printed page through multiple means, including the incipient musicality of words and stringing together nonsense syllables and nursery rhyme imagery with a deeply disturbing cumulative effect. Similarly, the harsh screams or melodic moans of Tomokawa's voice rail against the confines of his own vaguely symbolist words, generating the emotional voltage that threatens to melt the neural circuitry of his lyrics.

Tomokawa's early work was sometimes burdened by overly fussy studio arrangements, meaning the best of Box's compilation CD we its undressed solo tracks, such as his viciously strummed signature song 'Iketeiru Te Ite Miro' ('Dare To Say You're Alive'), where he ends a hoarsely barked challenge to his own existence with a spinechilling scream. On the other hand, the 80s PSF albums constituting the bulk of the box seed the organic gush of a longterm group of accompanists with the startlingly raw sound of Tomokawa's beat-up acoustic guitar. Violin and accordion add wheezy elements of chanson or gypsyish backlight, while drummer Toshi Ishizuka, who has been with Tomokawa since the mid-70s, shifts between martial propulsion, heavily escalating cymbal snowstorms, and delicate tonal colour. In full flight the group ride an elemental flow of rhythmic peaks and troughs, neither identifiably Eastern nor Western. Most intriguing, however, are the two albums *Maboroshi To Asou* and *Aiton Bon Goto* that feature the late great improvising bassist Motokazu Yoshizawa. From his homemade instrument Yoshizawa generates thick, snaking electronic greys, which he works through, and around Tomokawa's melodic lines and free-tonal vocalising in thrilling and musically fulfilling ways. □

their ideas have succeeded, like the set of shows played inside their van which became the subject of an acclaimed documentary; others have failed, such as their plan to make 300 "non-repetitive" albums in 2001, which died somewhere around record 137; but they've all been coherent. That streak ends on *Killbill*, the group's first album proper. Their label demands the album is about a futuristic American football game where players are equipped with PCP and knives instead of helmets and pads, but none of that is present in the music: The only song with lyrics, "Carnage Is Unborn," is a vague monster story that says nothing about football or anything else, except that Friends Forever are willing to open an album with a lame throwaway.

Once the singing is over, however, *Killbill* sports some nice tribal Metal, with primal drumming and mechanistic riffs that's about nothing but visceral aural bliss. At times Friends Forever sound like a beer-guzzling version of The Boredoms, or Devo in an animated Godzilla movie. "We" into the choked Metal wail of a stored Fucking Champ, while "Linebacker Bitch" is pure Yamatake Eye-style pump and chant. The group's conceptual taste—brainless versions of football events like emmying crowd cheering and unruly marching band parades—may make *Gwar* seem complex, but the music itself is onto something.

Friends Forever don't have many tricks in their drum bag, though, and *Killbill* exhausts its tank so quickly that almost half of its poetry 30 minutes is a rare filler. There's enough energy and abandon in the rest to give Friends Forever a free pass for now, but unless they can learn some more new, the buzzer that ends their career is going to sound pretty soon.

**FUSHITSUSHA**  
1978: EIEN NO HO GA SAKI NI  
TE O DASHITA NO SA  
PSP 82016 CD

BY RYMON COLLEY

Standard histories of Keiji Haino have named how *Fushitsusha* formed in 1978 but, despite the Haino-only *Fushitsusha* disc featured in his four CD box set *The Purple Trap*, no documentation exists of the group prior to their first eponymous two LP set from 1989.

According to legend, the earliest version of the combo was a duo with Haino and Tamiyo Shiroh, now a master of freak register wailing, breath, then a synthesizer player with static, psychedelic tendencies. After this, *Fushitsusha*

assumed their more familiar power trio format, with bassist Jun Homano and drummer Takashima. This line-up lasted for a year or so, and although live gigs have been mentioned, there have never even been rumors of recordings. Until now.

1978: Eien No Ho Ga Saki Ni Te O Dashi Te No Sa (translated by Alan Cummings as something like *It Was Eternity That Reached Out Its Hand First*) documents this early trio, recorded in a rehearsal studio. It consists of two long tracks of raw, psychedelic guitar improvisations and extremely whooped out rhythmic explorations, doing everything they can to subvert standard rock motion and/or dynamics. In their place they substitute drug-electron experimentation flailing towards the edges of consciousness, while creating a huge void in the center of the music that generates enough gravity to keep Haino from floating off the planet entirely.

And Haino himself is completely bent on this one. Intensely focused, he creates an incredible collage of miniature textures linked only by strange internal energy fields. It's clearly a rock music of sorts, but it sounds unique even inside the context of Haino's oeuvre. To think that it was recorded the same year as the first *Fishbeaters* EP is almost too strange to countenance.

Haino's music is always difficult to place vertically, but this stuff is so alien as to be absolutely timeless. The historians can say it was recorded in 1978, and someone may be able to prove it. But it could be from yesterday just as easily. Or tomorrow. Amazing stuff.

**THE HANDSOME FAMILY**  
SINGING BONES  
LDOSCE VCD044 CD

BY JOHN MURPHY

Cannually, the persistent cheerleading which The Handsome Family have received from Greg Marcus in recent years may not have entirely positive results. Marcus has called this husband and wife duo, currently residing in Albuquerque, "The Beatles of the folk world," and identified them as the modern group who best understand the weariness and meaning inherent in Harry Smith's *Anthology Of American Folk Music*.

Those who uncomprehendingly come to *Singing Bones* in search of game, earnest storytelling and "authenticity" will be disappointed, however. As on their previous five albums, Brett and Rennie Sparks transform folk music into a precise, spectral theatre. Certainly, there's a sense of mythic being updated in

Rennie Sparks's exceptional lyrics, as old spirits and superstitions permeate the modern world through a computer screen, or haunt the deserted aisles of a convenience store in the early hours of the morning.

But there's a critical distancing from conventional notions of roots music here which may alienate traditionalists, and which makes The Handsome Family all the more appealing. They always appear to be a few useful steps away from reality, so that the most plausible reference points are folkies and game players like Lee Hazlewood and Stephen Merritt (The Magnetic Fields' lugubrious, Striped Country album *The Churn Of The Highway* Sings, in particular), as well as the bleak romanticism of Roy Orbison sometimes approximated by singer Brett Sparks.

Occasionally, the calculated otherness of it all feels a little too forced, as if the Handsome Family are uncovering the signs of felineations in the USA today for whimsical rather than profound purposes. But then, in the midst of a hokey choice like "If The World Should End In Fire", they'll deploy mythic archetypes in a way that is actually touching: "Behind the gauzy haze/Of life is lust/dreams/There's a place where time is dead/And all things stand still and always will/And always will."

**HYBRID SOUND SYSTEM**  
WINTER WAS HARD TOO...  
TOURISTE TUCK N' CO

BY BRIAN MORTON

Hybrid Sound System is pianist Reinhold Friedl and saxophonist Ulrich Krieger. Both are also composers. The title piece, with its lily reference, is Friedl's while Krieger is credited with the deliciously tragic *Fallen From Grace*. Both pieces call on the services of violinist Burkhard Strohhausen, who also composed the opening *Something Lost... Tune for saxophone, piano and slowed down sax and piano sounds*.

It's all very much lower case music, quiet and unemphatic, which makes the remix album accompanying the disc all the more shocking. Not because it's hard and abrasively best driven, but because the sparseness of H/S/S's aesthetic is largely lost, and with it the group's main misdeed. Perhaps the key performance on the first disc is a lovely stylized version of John Cage's *Two*, in which individual sounds fall, soak and merge like ink on parchment. Some of those sounds re-emerge identifiably on Carsten Nicolai's remix *Alia Noto 2.1*, though here they

are entirely pretty.

Lee Ransaldo's mix concentrates on violin sounds and percussive, almost timeless piano attacks, and most of the other realisations work in this same area. Dear Roberts contributes too overlong meditations, and predictably only *Masaru Kitayama* Meadow has the confidence to tamper dramatically with the dynamics, though his blaring introduction is a misleading portal to a mix that relies as much on silence as on noise.

Imagining as the mixes are (they only live as a lack of vivacity), it's the instrumental album that commands attention. Friedl and Krieger are both extremely confident and unafraid and work all the final pieces of the set. Maximal Cerebration's *Four Constellations Before A Day* has, on only any hint of virtuosity, though that may be the score rather than the performance.

**PETER KOWALD & WILLIAM PARKER**  
THE VICTORIAVILLE TAPE  
VICTO 081 CD

**ALLEN/DRAKE/JORDAN/ PARKER/SILVA**  
THE ALL-STAR GAME  
EREMITE 044 CD

**BUDBILL/PARKER/DRAKE**  
SONGS FOR A SUFFERING  
WORLD  
BOLDHOLDER 044 CD

BY JULIAN KOWLEY

In May 2002, just four months before he sudden death, double bassist Peter Kowald attended the Festival International de Musique Actuelle at Victoriaville, Canada and performed a double bass duet with William Parker. The duet format appealed to Kowald greatly; two voices emerging from two distinct bodies of experience, a third voice emerging from their combination. One outcome of this was *Dues: Europe-America-Japan (FMP)*, dialogues with a startlingly diverse selection of musicians. Another was *Bass Duets (FMP)*, experimental encounters with Basia Phillips, Barry Guy and Maarten Altena. The Victoriaville Dues, two colossal musicians interacting, is of the same calibre.

Parker's jazz credentials are impeccable; he studied with Milt Hinton, Richard Davies and Jeremy Gansson, and their lessons pass through his playing, explicitly or tacitly. Kowald was well aware that jazz was not his tradition. His improvising was genuinely idiosyncratic, taking the bass as a benign giant to be activated rather than a technical mountain to climb. His deeply

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[KANADA]



HATUTLOGY 199 - NEW RELEASE



Danjelo, D'Agaro,  
Ernst Gierling,  
Han Bennink  
Strandjuellers

HATUTLOGY 4-000



Danjelo, D'Agaro,  
Ernst Gierling,  
Han Bennink  
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HATUTLOGY 837



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HATUTLOGY 199 - NEW RELEASE



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HATUTLOGY 199 - NEW RELEASE



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Han Bennink  
Strandjuellers

corpsal throat singing, heard during this performance, belonged to the same vibrational continuum as his instrumental soundings. Parker and Kowalski shared knowledge of music as a way of living and this occasion was a dazzling synthesis of the two kinds of expertise.

The aptly named *The Air-Ster Game*, recorded in concert in Boston at the end of 2000, finds Parker in bass catcalls with another legendary figure, Alan Silva, who spent the 1960s in the company of Sun Ra, Cecil Taylor and Albert Ayler. Their interplay is locked into a free-blowing quartet with two other vintage Sun Ra associates, Marshall Allen on alto and Kidd Jordan on tenor, as well as Harold Dials on drums. The twisted basses spawn a thrumming undertone, while the woefully under-recorded Jordan stunts and flares, and the wailing Allen is fabulously wild. Dials impresses as ever, constantly shifting octaves, marking out coordinates, sustaining and extrapolating from the ensemble sound. Six sections are identified but the music spills out continuously in a single 68 minute piece. Given the vintage of most participants and the taxing demands such music makes on stamina it's scarcely surprising that pace and intensity slackened towards the end of this long, excellent outpouring of jazz know-how.

On *Songs For A Suffering World*, Buddhist poet David Budner is joined by Parker and Drake to offer *A Prayer For Peace, A Protest Against War*. In addition to bass, Parker plays several instruments, including pocket cornet and shakuhachi, and he sings. One track offers four minutes 22 seconds of animated, centralized double bass and drum interaction, whereas Parker and Drake simply add ornament to Budner's poetic earnestness, his listless about ancient Chinese emperors and declarations such as "Presidents and prime ministers, despots and dictators, we don't want to fight your wars". It's decidedly Budner's record.

## LAIBACH

WAT

MUSIC STRUMMED CD

BY LINA DZIVIKOVIC-RUSSELL

In times of global confusion, hearing Laibach's apocalyptic shriek feels oddly reassuring. As the world spins out of control, Laibach are sure to be there locking eyes with impending doom and delivering the news. Seven years after their last album, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, the Slovenian masters of ambiguity, reverse-engineered symbolism and industrial collage return with a 12 track album that, in true Laibach style, plunges headlong into an exposé of realpolitik spycraft while many believe they're a symptom of it.

WAT is less ambiguous than much of Laibach's earlier work. With track titles such as "Linde" ("The End") and "Das Spiel Ist Aus" ("The Game Is Over"), their message of impending doom has never been clearer. The album is loaded with references to the erosion of a common language between East and West. In "The Great Divide", its narrative periodically interwoven with a highly melodic Arabic vocal, a deadpan Laibach voice calmly relates: "The rising of the century did not bring catharsis/The rising of the century did not bring salvation/The crack is getting deeper/And the flames are burning higher".

Similarly, the opening track, "B Machine" takes

a grand stroll through "the last day" while speaking of "facing our dream machines into the sky". "B Machine" is backed by an orchestral sweep of theatrical organs, a pulsating drumbeat and a sampled Arabic chorus.

The title track "WAT" is an acronym for "We Are Time", referencing a song from Bristol's postpunkfunk unit Pop Group. Starting with what is, for Laibach, an unusually gentle bass, "WAT" acquires weight as their low and vocal specialist growls the group's manifesto. "We are no ordinary type of group/We are no humble pop musicians/We don't seduce with melodies/And we are here to please you/We have no answers to your questions/We can question your demands."

As with all Laibach's output, the artwork is integral to the album's meaning. The WAT booklet features the group ambiguously clad in uniforms of high command, their magnum unclear. US? German? By way of a clue, the electrostatic single released from the album, "Lanz Mir Laibach", crunches two tracks, "Lanz Mir" and "Lanz Der Mussolini", by Deutsch-Amerikanische-Freundschaft. That group's name might well be the banner beneath which WAT is erected.

The music oscillates between harder rhythm driven tracks like the aforementioned single, "Achtung" and "Das Spiel Ist Aus", and dark, digitally layered and sedated mood tracks, spiced with evanescent electronic samples and spoken word passages. Yet for all its heavy themes and endurance overtones, WAT is an uncharacteristically pleasant and swingy album to listen to, even as it gins manically in the face of fortifying reality.

## TIMOTHY LEARY THE PSYCHEDELIC EXPERIENCE

LOOUST 37 CD

BY MARCUS BOON

In 1963, when the texts used in *The Psychedelic Experience* were written, long before the swinging acid pop guru recordings of *You Can Be Anything* *This Time Around*, or his inspired acid rock collaboration with Agha Karpal on *Seven Up*, Timothy Leary was still a tweedy professor of psychology at Harvard. Here you can feel the tweny rapidly unravelling with each dose of LSD. These recordings were originally issued as *Flashings* in 1966, and those expecting brain-boggling sounds and audio lockery will be disappointed. There's only Leary's voice, in Zen guru/indulgent scientist mode, and the occasional temple bell. But it's more than enough. Reading excerpts from his recently published *How to Tap Into the Psychedelic Experience*, which heavily samples spiritual classics such as the Tibetan Book Of The Dead, Leary delivers calm, sober advice on how to blast off into far-flung neurological regions of inner space, become enlightened and then return to everyday reality.

He sounds so smooth as he takes apart the remaining fabric of uptight, bourgeois, post-Enlightenment 1950s consciousness that it's easy to forget what a radical shift in worldview he was advocating. At the same time, there's a gorgeous trancelike in the recordings — truly the sound of someone who thinks he's discovered something big and wants everyone to know it in the dearest, most unambiguous terms. Clearly designed as a manual to accompany amateur

psychopharmacological experimentation, these recordings contain a time capsule whose contents still sound vibrant and relevant, whether or not accompanied by the right chemicals.

## LÉ QUAN NINH LE VENTRE NEGATIF NIGHTS IN A CITY CD

BY DAN WARSWITSON

Toulouse based percussionist Lê Quan Ninh has appeared on 25 albums since 1965's *Misère*. L'Esprit du Lac, but each of his outings has been a major work. Unsurprisingly, his preceding 1995 solo album, *Quatre Nuits Pour A Eau* inspired, was a hard act to follow, but the five outstanding tracks that make up *Le Ventre Négatif*, impeccably recorded by Pierre-Olivier Bouchard, have been well waiting for, and the music is far more digestible than the opaque but thankfully brief *Quatre Nuits*.

Ninh's work is as much about texture as it is percussion: in performance he leans over a horizontally mounted bass drum, coaxing sounds from all over its surface with a variety of sticks, switches and an impressive collection of cymbals, gongs and metal bowls. The drumhead becomes a kind of vibrational laboratory, sometimes partitioned into tiny enclosures where extraneous objects — he's quite apt to talk to chipsticks — are allowed to vibrate in sympathy. The sheer range of sounds he summons forth from a relatively small number of instruments — if cymbals and pine cones qualify as such — beggars belief. At times you could swear there's a cello in there, or perhaps long-time friend Michel Doneda has slipped in some saxophone — but no: it's a veritable one man orchestra. Lê Quan Ninh's background in classical percussion as a member of Quatuor Helios is worthy of mention. Indeed, the organic and evoking sense of structure of this music is closer in spirit to contemporary composition.

## LIMESCALE LIMESCALE NIGHTS IN A CITY

BY BRIAN MORTON

Inside the Grotte Rose at d'Argentan, France, the rate of accretion in the limestone deposits and the resulting number of instruments — if cymbals and pine cones qualify as such — beggars belief. At times you could swear there's a cello in there, or perhaps long-time friend Michel Doneda has slipped in some saxophone — but no: it's a veritable one man orchestra. Lê Quan Ninh's background in classical percussion as a member of Quatuor Helios is worthy of mention. Indeed, the organic and evoking sense of structure of this music is closer in spirit to contemporary composition.

As often as not, Tony Benett's bass saxophone provides it, sounding not unlike a brass bass in a New Orleans brass band. There, within a breath's length, he's leaving like a stealer again. It's

a wonderful sound, resolutely old-fashioned and a perfect foil to Alex World's wheedling clarinet, sometimes a bit lost in the recording, but padded with musical intelligence. His work on "Cherry Singles Ball" and "French Andrew" is stunning.

The two remaining participants are THF Orenching and Sonic Pleasure, credited with "Otiaphone" and "Bricks" respectively. Because there is no clear sure expectation for either, their contributions are harder to assess—it is probably how it should be, because this is a genre collective. Bailey is the senior figure and most in an abate now so familiarly strangle that most of us can recognize him from a couple of notes. But he's also the tuxedo philosopher of a kind of eagles improvisation that submerges identity. I always quote the advice Keith Tippett gave to listeners on the last Century Lodge LP: Don't try to work out what instrument is playing each sound. Listen as you would listen to an orchestra. Lumsdace is a scratch orchestra in which every member plays off scratch. One of the most stimulating records you'll hear this year.

## LUMEN THIS DAY & AGE GHOST TOWN GUSTO CD BY TOM ROGGE

A few years back Pinks Macure released the album From Memorial Crossing, her collaboration with multi-instrumentalist John Wils, who of late was The War & Sex. And now this album. Lumen's Macure's impressive vocal is off-kilter arrangements, her jazz-influenced voice contrasting and competing with abrasive edginess and smashable rhythms. It included a cover of Tom Waits's "I'll Shoot the Moon", which was a fairly early indicator of where Macure and Wils were coming from.

Now under the Lumen name, and with funding from the Scottish Arts Council, this project takes a different approach. From one viewpoint certain things haven't changed: Macure's voice is as versatile, it grounded in jazz and blues, and these songs are structured around her singing, which means they owe something to more traditional forms. However, Wils's arrangements are very stripped-down and unbusy, with none of the muddled competitiveness sometimes found in electronic rock songs. Edits and samples are streamlined, with Wils concentrating instead on low, pulsating rhythms and uncluttered patterns.

This leaves it down to Macure to really drive things, whether crooning languidly or singing in high-pitched rhapsodies. There's a theatricality to her performance as she details men-soliloquies and psychodramas, but generally the histrionics are kept in check in favour of a more exploratory feel, as her voice dips and soars around these songs. Avoiding the pitfalls of pop and chit-chat with some ambivalence, and with just enough of an experimental edge. This Day & Age waves together its modern and traditional strands, and comes out sounding bold and distinctive.

## MATMOS THE CIVIL WAR MAYOR CLEVER CD BY MATT WAND

There is no such thing as a war that is 'civil', even if those awfully nice Brits are involved.

California's Matmos know it, hence the album title. "Regicide" is all jaunty Renaissance descent recondes and slippery burly-gurdy and comes over like a straighter version of the Goodiepa's mind-bogglingly brilliant leap into Steeleye Span territory. With guest contributions from Hruski, Radar Brothers' Steve Goodfriend and Jim Putnam, Jay Lesser, David Grubbs, Blewin Blacutt, Tim Barnes, improv guitarist Keenan Lawler, and Acleto's Mark Lightcap, this isn't just going to be a re-run of The Weist, this duo's excellent digital dissection and distortion of Country rock and bottleneck blues from 1999, but it also seems historically anachronistic in the context of any US civil war.

"Zealous Order Of Candel Kings" continues the anachronism, having more of the air of Celtic folk talk about it, bodhran rhythms, a pageant nursery rhyme tune straight from The Wicker Man, but rarer a hint of Yankee marching music. Surely the war must be coming soon?

In "Reconstruction", a war of sorts begins, but it's a war between old Matmos habits of drifting around electronically in one rhythmic space and a new desire to invite their pals round the campfire and indulge in Christian singalongs, which is where this track ends up after the hectic electronic headwinds fizzes out. You half expect evangelical folkie Ganes. Comments to pipe up singing of how it's especially nice, when the sun goes down, to be with your friends. "YITE" is exactly that: rightness come to life, a full-on friends 'n' neighbours jam session over a pleading version of Iggy Pop's "Lust For Life" n'.

"For The Trees" is the party on the porch gone way past its bedtime. Someone slips a megadon in the drummer's room and he mistakes a couple of fly swats for his drumsticks. Having left their guitar somewhere near the sawmill, someone else has to improvise by playing a faulty copy of Eno's Apollo Soundtracks. But still no sign of the Civil War.

"The Stars And Stripes Forever" is a welcome little construction, resembling a tune from a kiddies' stagecoach ride outside of a Wal-Mart and cutting back and forth between what sounds like various location recordings of ordinary folks playing "The Stars And Stripes" in retirement homes or town squares, all with a manic drum solo rattling away the top. It could be Negativland in top form. Matmos should do more of this.

"Poi And Heller" claims all sounds are sampled from a dead rabbit's pelt (money bagpipe anyone?) and as such is a return to the 'holter yankee and amplified hair' of tracks like "Verb" and "Schilus" from their Matmos debut (1998). But despite the audio pan of heavy traffic flying past threatening distant roadkill and a possible guest vocal from Mr A Gerunzel, I'm not convinced they're enjoying this way of working any more.

"The Struggle Against Unequality" could be a recent Michael Gira outtake, with the sounds of someone getting busy in the sawmill on some of their pesky acoustic instruments. The album finishes with a return to "For The Trees", but now the drummer is selfily tucked up in his hammock and the cicadas are getting agitated wondering when the rest of the Mayday-Ashbury hitbabes will arrive to their bunk and let the insects get on with the real Country music. It's all been very 'civil', but still no sign of that dang war.

## KAFFE MATTHEWS CD EB + FLO ANNETTE WORKS AWCD00055 2XCD BY BRIAN MORTON

cd eb + flo is Kaffe Matthews' latest, alphabetically installed after cd Ave, cd Baa, cd Cooie, cd ds, as well as the magnificent In Case Of Fire Baa The Stars with Andrea Neumanns and Sachiko M, which was released on MJJ rather than Annette Works.

Anyway, here we are, 300-some minutes of live sampling and therein processing in a variety of room feedbacks spread between London, Essex, Quebec, Maine and Perth (whether Scotland or Australia is not clarified). What's still here is a delicacy of touch and sensitivity to the drama of duration which has marked all of Matthews' works. She has no apparent interest in chasing down the creative potential of boredom, and none in creating tense environments in which the listener sits occluded rather than entranced. Matthews allows us bound to last longer than seems natural, and manipulates transitions with an enforced sense of occasion that had me smiling spontaneously through the discs, even after several hearings of both.

What is lacking is some of the gentle tension and musical argument heard in her work with guitarist Andy Moor (aka Andy Eds) and in her astonishing duet album with Neumanns and Sachio that remains the pinnacle of Matthews' recording career to date. All these pieces were "recorded on home", and perhaps that is the problem with them, again, as the subtle as. They seem too gentle, too familiarly at hand, and at times slightly airless. Better than almost anything else in this idiom is 2003, though.

## GUIDO MÖBIUS KLUSTEN KLANGKRIEG KK14 CD BY DAVID STUBBS

Earning his dirty crust with Autopilot, who do publicity for Faust's label Klangbad among others, Cologne's Guido Möbius sedulines as a techno DJ, and solo artist whose sound gently defies definition. Kluster isn't the sort of album that plunders into your consciousness and pulverizes your sensibilities. Rather, it's immensely dispositive yet immensely likeable, with Möbius's facility for melody and warm tones deceiving you as to just what he's smuggling through here. This is radical stuff but never ugly, abrupt or jarring.

Möbius prelates latticed combinations of acoustic instruments as a rule, with samples and Moogs playing a modest, if crucial, supporting role. Opening track "Pick Nick" is typical, its hippy claps opening soon deferring to an acoustic feast with synths buzzing around like wasps. "Nelles" is similarly inoffensive yet subtle, the rhythmical ground shifting imperceptibly beneath your feet, a seamless metamorphosis occurring mid-song that doesn't put you out of joint. "Ker" sounds great, all little legs and clomping munchkins until, as is Möbius's wont, he switches gear from the banal to the haunting. Similarly, "Drinoo" starts out like the premises of a 70s school music along going through their paces, all triangles and guitars, until the wraith of nostalgia is elevated into something altogether more prosaic.

"Nachtsicht" is darker and more disturbing, Bates intruding delicately and ominously like

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wooden wind chimes passing in the middle of a forest, as Betina Weber's violin sways insistently through the Ambient fabric. Finally "Wie Es Ist...", in which voices pipe up uninvitingly for the only time on the album, a brief burst of Keutrock berberstep, then a momentous dancour of drums and violins not unlike Henry Cow, as a synth throbs reflectively in the midst of the mix.

There is little to be said for Akten beyond celebrating its endless capacity to delight, confound and unsettle through its unlikely instrumentation and arrangements and its complex rhythmic sense. Its beauty is of the gratuitous, strong in itself safety. All the more reason, therefore, to list in love with it.

## CHIE MUKAI & RINJI FUKUOKA L'ENERGIE DE L'EXISTENCE TURTLES REMIXED TOCDOGS CD

BY DAN WARBURTON

Described in producer Michel Herzi's typically colourful sleeve notes as "a mezzotone figure of the Japanese improvisation scene", Jukyu player Che Mukai worked with Taj Mahal Travellers' founding father Taketoshi Kosugi before branching out into psychedelic folk with Chi-Shu. Her solo albums on PSF and Sven inevitably came to the attention of Japophile Herzi, along with several unreleased disc readings with cellist Riri Fukuoka who also plays guitar in his psych group Overhang Party, but Mukai destined to have exciting tapes released, performing instead to record fresh material live in Tokyo's Ogikubo Community Centre last September.

After a six minute introductory incantation of sorts on piano and drums, they settle into an extended jazz, anchored harmonically by Fukuoka's droning cello. The prevailing tenor is indexed to the mournful timbre of Mukai's Jukyu (also known in Chinese as erhu), a two-stringed violin played vertically like a cello. Using a relatively primitive delay unit, the duo build up a towering carnivorous cloud of swelling pitches, augmented eventually by Mukai's vocals and driven to an intense climax at the 37 minute mark, when she turns to the drum kit. The second track, extracted from the preceding evenings concert, presents more of her cavernously intense drumming, but at just 9:33" it inevitably comes across as a rather anticlimactic afterthought after the 46 minute opener. But, as anticlimax goes, it's a pretty damn powerful one.

## MM NAJI & KM KHAJIL YEMEN: LA CHANSON D'ADEN INSTITUT DU MONDE ARABE 32145 CD

BY CLIVE BELL

Located south of Saudi Arabia, Yemen seems a closed, medieval country, especially its island capital, Sana'a. And yet the British Arabist writer Tim Mackintosh-Smith, author of the highly enjoyable *Travels With A Bangle*, has lived happily in Sana'a for the past 20 years. The coastal port of Aden, made up of several towns scattered across a volcanic, dead to be one of the great cosmopolitan centres of the Middle East, along with Berber and Alexandria, in the first half of the 20th century. Aden was one of the largest ports in the world, and, far from the puritanical imams of Sana'a, home to a vibrant music scene.

The 'Aden chanson' of this album developed in the 1940s as an urban style of poetic song with ad accompaniment. Casual elements were a search for Yemeni cultural identity, and the patriotic drive towards independence - Betina gave up the colony in 1967. The two singers, one aged 60, the other a sprightly 81, were recorded live in 1998 in Paris, in front of an appreciative audience who knew to whistle and ululate at appropriate moments. Mohammed Mursel Hajj sings and plays out with great fluency and informal freshness, his listeners clearly in the palm of his hand. His delicate introduction to "Is Neatly, The Gateway To The Underworld" is spellbinding - then suddenly percussion and bawling chorus leap in to join him.

The older of the two, Khalil Mohammed Khail, has never been a professional singer. Like many Yemeni musicians he held a day job, in his case as governor of Aden's prisons. His improvising on ad is wonderfully relaxed, and as for his singing, I'd be happy to have that energy now, never mind when I'm 81. Khail takes the last two of eight tracks on the album. This is engaging and accessible music. To appreciate it fully, chewing Yemen's mildly narcotic (that leaves probably helps, but even without, it's an entertaining album).

## PIMMON SNAPS \* CRACKLES \* POPS HOLLYWOOD RECORDS CD

BY DAVID STUBBS

Pimmon, aka Australian producer Paul Gough, pushes further away from the loop into a remote world of loops of his own, one he's been devising since 1999. These tracks can either immerse you completely in their mesmeric thral or barely impinge on your consciousness at all, depending more on the quality and span of your own attention rather than their content. Only "Frosty Peak", reminiscent of one of Faust's wheezer "Party" pieces, fails to ignite or move. Everything else here works, other than its lack of a charm.

"No Jazz For Jokers" takes almost obvious sources in its effort to beguile, combining memorably cyclical ten-ton rhythms of the old "the natives are restless, Carathens" school with the masonic buzz of snakecharmer pees. And yet, the combined and fused effect is somehow as captivating as if such ethnic sounds had never been heard in the West. "The Cinema Tech One Twentieth" is an extended analogue synth line twisting and untwisting like self-regenerating ecstasium into infinity. The title of "RTW: Sound Of A Finished Kiss" suggests that part of what Pimmon is trying to do is delay a me by taking a crucial sliver of an ecstatic moment and somehow stretch and speed it beyond its temporal norm for further ecstatic and lunation. Here, the decisive moment is one of punting, dangerously pleasurable undulating, a glowing bass vibe in a constant process of becoming. As Les Permen said of Pimmon in these pages, his music "w[as] back live time out of dead sounds".

"Over The Black Dot" strikes a refreshing but ultimately distracting chord, its appy, silvery, loosed rip splashes in like melodic a vapours of Peter Gabriel's "Solsbury Hill" and you think you're in for some pop moment out of the blue. However, by dint of sheer repetition, as 'false' to evolve, one becomes fixated less on the rip itself than on its glimmering aluminium surfaces, as

will as the sinister Moog searching it appears to be triggering off.

The faintly gamin chimes of "The King, The Eye And The Sarboar" remind faintly of that other Australian purveyor of surrealism Ambient rock, Paul Schütze, while "Vogel Circuits" shimmers in impossible dimensions. Finally the odd, backward shuffle and dark serial buzzing of "The Sacred Dance Of Mimi Lust" work up to a concluding drench that for space's sake can only be stopped dead in its tracks. These are, after all, the various sounds of forever.

## QUASI HOT SHIT MONTAG WIGWAG CD

BY MAIA CLARKE

Portland, Oregon based divos Sam Coomes and Janet West first joined musical forces in the dark, lo-fi rock group Montag before forming Quasi in 1993. After releasing a string of low deleted vinyl 45s (collected on 1996's *Early Recordings*) and a debut album, *R&B Transmogrification*, that same year Quasi were temporarily sidelined as Coomes concentrated on his Blues Gospel covers project, and West joined Sister Ninety.

Now back on track, Hot Shit leads appropriately on from 2001's *The Sword Of God*. Having dropped the primitive Rockstar synthesizer that dominated their earlier recordings, the duo favour guitar led melodies and jangling, scorching piano chords. In typical Quasi style, the songs on Hot Shit often start in a state of chaotic imbalance, with unfocused guitar riffs and West's shattering drum beats. These breakdowns quickly converge in text melodic structures as each song shapes up. This is most effective in "Master And Beg", initiated by Coomes's broken guitar line, which eventually takes up a repetitive whine and provides a flexible base for the surprise time change that signals the end of the track. Sparse sonic textures and an unexpected chorus appear in the piano heavy "Drunkten Kids" compare well with tracks such as "Good Times", where a sample of a gospel choir is warped by a percussion solo that sounds as if it's played on cheap sheepsacks, and interrupted by a fierce keyboard interlude.

As is the case with their other projects, Coomes and West's compact set up maximizes an awkward dynamic balancing natural elegance with barbed experiment to sustain the music's flux of design and accident.

## AKIRA RABELAIS ...BENEDICTION, DRAW... ORTHOGONAL MUSIC ORTHO CD

BY IAN PENMAN

Initially I kept writing his name AK, which is not of course, it's AR, which it isn't either, of course. That itself is an ask: what's he got to hide? A fabrication or sploring or hidden assumption, a benediction of sorts (now I know why I kept transposing these initials - Chris Marker's film about Akira Kurosawa, AK), a way of speaking, a way of naming or not naming a way for us to know who is playing but not necessarily who it speaks for, not that that's what these sounds like someone 'playing' a guitar, which would not be the right name for the distinctly un-Babsonian sound he offers us along his lazy boy way. Magnetic north? Modally east? (What's the



word where you steer your own course by the night time sky? Several any way you hear it, all sorts of codes and ciphers, leaves and shaves, veils and smokes, (not speaking or striking) the plink, and all the rest of the clues can be found on his wonderful Website (go to [www.akrosbelle.com](http://www.akrosbelle.com) for further amplification). Which, funny enough, in this morning's sun I was studying a spider's web between the trees and branches and all the micro space between, and I thought: that's him, exactly. All these parallel lines, straight in themselves, but they add up to echo work, gentle curve and bend and near invisible wasp trap, stealthy (like) construction so that before you know it, you've been taken along the lines of the lines of the lines, oh yes, all very nice, pretty, post-Frop/Eno. But before you know it you're caught in his patented trap, and it's his alone, a lustrous, patient catchment area, worked on and worked over by his trademark software Agapophrosites lyrics, such a natural sound squeezed from hi-tech devices and oblique strategies. Ah yes, there's even a link to Brian Eno and Peter Schmitt's set of cards, *Oblique Strategies*. I drew #66: "Imagine the pieces as a set of disconnected events." And somewhere between that beneficial distraction and another staged direction/pre-diction, "Recombination as an outward projection of memory nostalgia and... behind the shades of all these axes and links and remedied chronies and the central fly go[es]t" arsenal of Apple Mac/Agapophrosites/SonicSpace - he's actually offhandedly killed off all the "me" of the song "in the air".

And the thing itself, the solo guitar polyphony? A wholly seductive arcadian mood-based, immemorial suite in eight pieces, which is like *Sans Of The Lid*, only slightly harsher, less holy but just as haunting. As to what the child is haunted by, his sleeve offers some clues, no less clear for being in French, no clue if it's his mother's tongue. But he's dedicated (it) to parental absence. "Dédicé [which already rings with dead-ies] à mon père qui ne m'a jamais connu" and "ma mère qui m'a abandonné". The name of Jean Genet inevitably pops up here (her whose gift was giving me up for adoption, abandoning me to fashion my own fate or grace or Seng) to receive his due benediction. "et tous les amis que j'ai perdus en chemin." Friends lost along the way, give the civil gift, and drift with what he gives us in turn, but warm currents, green rivers, interlocked glimmering, shimmer, cold in isolation but wholly warm when they find a join-the-dots harmony of their own, their own harmonic atmosphere, faint, flat, Ambient but not dead, as he says, sonic wallpaper, or more "Ambient as more electronic flower arranging, for more, further, unerring, sounds without lyrics, wounds without a name, a mere without an out, a hairg, hauntingly personal and oblique, as best.

## ERNST REISEGER WITH MOLA SYLLA & SERIGNE CM GUEYE

JANNA  
VENTURA • WINTER 1994/95 CD  
BY TOM PERCHARD

Both originally from Senegal, vocalist Sylla and percussionist Gueye are now Amsterdam-based, and share with Reiseiger an association with drummer Hans Bennet - although the Dutch cellist has played with just about everybody in

European improv and avant-jazz. The songs here, mostly sung in Wolof and Arabic, meld traditional verses with Sylla's own lyrics, melding modal aphorisms with contemporary political comment.

The two soundscapes is translucent and thin, with plenty of light between Gueye's deep hand drums, Reiseiger's plucked cello and Sylla's twinkling voice. But the separate threads come to twist around themselves: a plain midground, framed of Sylla's simple pentatonic folk phrases and Reiseiger's kam-like harmonic outline, is enshrouded by the ribia's ornate and awkward turn, and underlined by the changing, dissonant patches of Gueye's deeper drums. And just as Gueye is graceful and supple but has a treacherous attack, so Sylla's mellow and deep voice has tempered edges. For much of the album the cellist is not as tenderly inventive as his resources might allow, but Reiseiger's role is primarily rhythmic, his playing extraordinarily lively.

None of this is true for the album's standout track, "Jargime", which is quite different to everything else here. A 12 minute critique of colonialism's enduring legacy in Senegal, where French history and thinking supplant "traditional" cultural identities - the piece is a stark duo for Sylla and Reiseiger. The cellist starts it by whistling along to his own spectral harmonic melody, before descending into a furious shout of agitated chords, with Sylla descending and then singing above. Reiseiger's control is dazzling, the cellist alternately stretching and compressing the song's framework across every register of his instrument at tremendous speed. Sylla breaks off from her lyric for a series of distant cries that barely contain the violent bitterness of the lyric's political impulse.

## RODRIGUES/RODRIGUES/MOTA/Oliveira ASSEMBLAGE

CREATIVE SOURCES C5907 CD  
BY DAN WARBURTON

Since Expo '88, the Portuguese have been soaking up retrofitted and electronic music in all its forms, and reconfiguring it in a highly original manner as labels like Ser, Headlights and Creative Sources. This label was founded in 1999 by violinist Ernesto Rodrigues, who convinced the quartet Assemblage for a concert at Utrecht's Koningklijk Jazz Festival. On their debut album, Rodrigues is joined by Manuel Mota on electric guitar, José Oliveira on percussion, inside piano and acoustic guitar, and Rodrigues's 15 year old son Guilherme on pocket trumpet and cello. All are well aware of developments in recent improvised music, particularly lowcore, but they're wise enough to let the music dictate its own flow and structure without resorting to the dogmatic exclusion of occasional bursts of violence. Mota reveals more of the exquisite sense of timing that characterized his recent solo Brazilian outing *Leopardo* (see *The Wire* 230), and Oliveira, a polyvalent artist who also maintains close connections with local fusions like *akt*, including chains, dishes of water and Tibetan prayer bowls, and uses them to great effect. The sheer variety of timbres the group conjure up in under 35 minutes belies that more improv albums followed early in brooding, but their sensitivity to pitch belies a love for and understanding of

contemporary music. Their sense of space recalls Christian Wallt, while Rodrigues plays at its core clearly familiar with string techniques originating in New Music across the board, from Ismael Xanakis to Peter Kowald.

## ROTHKO AND BLK W/BEAR WISH FOR A WORLD WITHOUT HURT

TRACE RECORDINGS TRACE001 CD  
BY TOM RIDGIE

Mark Beesley's creative restlessness manifests itself in yet another different incarnation going under the Rothko name. Last year's *Continual Search For Origins* widened his field of collaboration but retained his authorial stamp, producing a work both idiosyncratic and accessible. This release, the first on Beesley's own Trace Recordings label, sounds like a step into the unknown in the pursuit of a more abstract methodology. Here he collaborates with Washington DC artist Ann Adams, aka BLK W/BEAR, on a combination of stark instrumental arrangements and sound collages inspired by the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Centre.

Half of the CD's eight tracks were originally released on a limited edition 12", and these are the ones that echo most clearly Beesley's past work, with banging strings and fragmentary melodies reverberating in space. Interspersed with these sparse refrains and dispersed patterns of notes are slabs of croaking, static noise and disorienting, shadowy field recordings.

The new material, co-written with Adams via a continuous exchange of sound files, feels unrooted from musical forms with a more discordant use of noise and the predominance of a murky, vaguely menacing Ambient presence. Flances Mogan adds slow, drone-like violin strands to one track, "Like Nails In The Rain", reinforcing the overall sense of unease combined with what must be assumed is a calculated sense of emptiness. If, as Beesley suggests, this is a declaration, it's one of compassion shot through with bleakness.

## MICHAEL J SCHUMACHER ROOM PIECES

N 197 99CD  
BY BRIAN MARLEY

Room Piece #1, which occupies the first CD of this set, is a lengthy composition taken at a leisurely pace. There's no development of the material material, at least not in the traditional sense, and sound events are outthrust by lavish silences. So far, so Martin Feldman. But whereas Feldman's principal domain is time, Michael J Schumacher's is space. He has aptly described his music as "a constellation of events, each moving in and out of audibility like a constellation of planets would move in and out of visibility if you were staring straight ahead".

Room Pieces begin in 1994 as a computer-assisted 16 channel installation in Schumacher's apartment. It was developed further at two New York gallery spaces dedicated to sound and intermedia, Studio Five Beekman and Deponex. The sketches of electric guitar, violin, oboe, analog synthesizer, sine tones, voices, percussion, piano and environmental sounds, of which this version consists, are programmed by the computer using complex algorithms and a measure of indeterminacy. Each time the



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composition is played, the durations, degrees of instrumental superposition and other key elements are presented differently in a field of shifting relationships. The permutations of the material are potentially infinite. Hearing the piece in a performance space to which it has been configured is the preferred option, but even in the stereo medium for this CD it lives, breathes and fascinate.

Movement without development is what Schumacher aims for in his music, so it's not surprising that he favors drums. On the second disc, *Silt* (the first of two versions, which uses an abridged solo sample) and *Unltd* are examinations of the rich interior life of sound. Anyone who has heard *Flow*, the 1997 CD that Schumacher made with Berbetogorgias guitarist Donald Miller, will have a good idea of what these pieces are like, especially the full-on, saturated, sine tone soundworld of *Unltd*, which at high volume brings everything it touches into sympathetic vibration. Of the remaining compositions, the more orthodox structured *Piece in 3 Parts* is at times a little stiff. But the second version of *Silt*, which gently allows interior rhythms to cancel each other out and imply stasis, is a fine example of what Schumacher does best.

## THE SILVER MT ZION MEMORIAL ORCHESTRA & TRA-LA-LA BAND

THIS IS OUR PUNK ROCK, THE RUSTED SATELLITES GATHER & SING

CONSTITUTION CUSTODY CD  
BY CUEVIE SILL

A side project of Montreal collective Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Silver Mt Zion began life as a trio of piano, double bass and violin. In line with Godspeed's tendency toward the epic, for their third album they have ballooned into The Silver Mt Zion Memorial Orchestra & Tra-La-La Band, plus the 24 Voice True Rusted Satellite Choir. Split right on the guitars, though, as their case remains simple, with a couple of drummers drafted in only to give a leg up when the group tackles the really big drums.

This is music on a symphonic scale, all about the steady crescendo or diminuendo, and well susceptible to fans of Richard Wagner or the old Pink Floyd. The opener, "Some Snow (Loversome Corner So Many Flowers Bloom)," begins by eavesdropping on a dance class or game, people running and counting steps. Then the guitar, amplified over built-up steps of interlocking lines, carrying us up to a drumming plateau of strings and ancient syntheses. From there we push up to the summit, accompanied by drums for the final three minute triumph. The whole visionary piece takes 16 minutes, and the listener may need to sit down with a cap of tea before proceeding to the album's other three suites.

Silver Mt Zion are confidently confident, rejecting conventional sounds of orchestras and other kitsch as firmly as they reject a conventional rock approach. A visual part of their almost William Blake-like vision is a dense, continual texture. Individual voices are uncredited, serving simply to express the group will, like a voice leading a vast hymn. The defiance extends to dispar of politics — "A Kenosis Of Megawattment," says the sleeve, next to a picture of (possibly) Tzarist

Russia — as well as suspicion of people who pour concrete over our favorite landscapes in the name of progress.

This is most clearly expressed on "Goodbye Desolate Railway," where a mournful song leads into a static lecture of zongs, guitars and electric treatments, paying homage to the sounds of railway shunting. Gradually we hear the actual sound of an enormous, lumbering train, as long as Canada itself. And the choir returns for a surprisingly tender finale. It's at moments like these that Silver Mt Zion are at their most impressive.

## SPLINTER GROUP BLOWING DOWN BLUE SKY

WITCHAMORE CD  
BY BYRON COLEY

GE Stinson is one of the most interesting guitar players currently working in the Los Angeles underground. Although he made his first splash as a founding member of Shadowfax, a prototype Prog/World Music/Now Age ensemble, he has evolved a manicured and harsh style over the last few years comparable to that of his friend, Neil Cline.

Like Cline, Stinson has a technical mastery of the instrument that many of his brethren do not. Thankfully GE doesn't let the exterior of mere riffs get in the way of wise-making. On *Blowing Down Blue Sky*, Stinson pulls a variety of red hot style pokes out of the fire and waves them around like a magic.

Much has been made of the way the group use DJ Chowdhury's turntables and Kaur's electronics as their rhythmic base, but there's not much here that anyone would find objectionably beat-orientated. The bottom of the sound is murky muffled and covered with all sorts of spikes. Often it's all but impossible to tell whether a particular noise is coming from the amps of Stinson, bassist Stuart Leung, or from one of the others' guitars.

The best tracks are piles of somewhat undifferentiated, but still vaguely pop-like noise, guitar, intercut with Kaur's post-lingua vocal action. Some stuff's heavily treated, other stuff is as much as it is. No one knows but the group. All a listener can say is that it fits together like a nice wet glow. And while I can feel a little of the pain that groped those who complain that there's a little too much funkiform funk blaring here, empirical listening reveals that is only true of a couple of tracks, and even on these the focus is on love rather than funk.

## KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN TIERKREIS: 12 MELODIEN DER STERNZEICHEN

WERGO WERGO CD  
BY JULIAN COWLEY

In 1974 Stockhausen chanced upon a Swiss factory that made music boxes and spent a week investigating their manufacture. At the same time he was engaged with astronomical writings, especially theories of correspondence between solar signs and human characters. He invented melodies to reflect the particular qualities of each star sign while taking account of the sound properties of music boxes, including some specially modified for his purposes. The result was *Tierkreis*, one of Stockhausen's most immediately accessible and

widely performed works. On this meticulously recorded CD it is realized in two versions.

As musical director, trombonist Mike Sloboda discovered ways to use the score material that he compares to a jazz musician's handling of a standard. The second version actually required the six performers to improvise freely upon Stockhausen's melodies, transferring responsibility for fidelity to the written notes to a pre-recorded tape plus the original music boxes. The programming for this release has interweaved the two readings, juxtaposing groups of three from each, so the aural structure of progress through the year is retained. This arrangement modifies the rhythm of listening and equally helps clarify the role of realization in each case.

The approachability of the melodies is enhanced by choice of instrumentation. Interim chime of the bells symbolizes in miniature some grand celestial mechanism, but there's bodily restraint to Sloboda's trombone, Wolfgang Fennou's double bass and Michael Ressler's bass clarinet, and lyrical sensitivity in Scott Rollet's clarinet; wit and edge lightness in Stefan Hussong's accordion; and Michael Kiedrich's percussion heightens the color and drama. The playing is superb, bringing vitality, varied mood, even humor to the music; as "Sagittarius" the ensemble does to swing, as "Capricorn" the music boxes do. In part the significance of *Tierkreis* is the degree of creative input from the performers. When the standard of the input is this high it becomes possible to deconstruct the music from legend and debate sufficiently to hear it clearly and enjoy it.

## SUPER SILENT

1-3  
RUNE GRAMMOFON RECORD 3000  
BY MARTIN LONGLEY

Although Supersilent's recent recordings have revealed a meditative aspect to their sound, the Norwegian free electro jazz quartet's recent UK tour found them in the same mild-up state that dominates this 1997 debut set, consisting of three discs released in one refining blow. It was the first ever Rune Grammoform release but it's only now does UK distribution.

The discs were recorded during Supersilent's first year of existence, filled with the dangerous energy caused by the pre-existing Volskelv trio's last meeting with producer/performer Helge "Deafbeats" Sten and his famed solo virus. Jari Vesterlund's intentionally busy drums are frequently found to the left of the stereo spread, often distorted down to the realm of cassette quality, but always imbued with a bossy beat. Soren and keyboardist Stille Storliken regularly play with percussive samples, throwing their own stutters into the melos. Rarely heard in its naked state, one Hanken's trumpet is usually sent through a rack of effects units. At times, when the electronics are fully operative, it's hard to separate their individual contributions.

Disc one's "1-4" exemplifies Supersilent's focused technique of setting up complementary patterns of repetition, with one or two members leading towards moments where the others explode with abstract fury. Here, Hanken sings a bass clarinet/digipend sound into the low frequency realm. "1-3" is a scorching assault, everyone flying at once, their resin lovingly sculpted into rich blacked textures that create a mood of suspended stress. Again, the drums

sound bootleggy, as the whole thing hurtles onward like a noisy industrial accident. Disc two's centrepiece is the 27 minutes of "2-8". With obvious John Bonham workout to the left, Procl and Storliken set up their churning cycles to the right while Hanken darts maggot spurs, sucking at the air out of their collective studio space. An electroacoustic glugging develops, as the improvisation gets heavier, harder, louder and faster.

Disc three lies in some coolant fluid, with "3-1" seeing Hanken undergo his dry Jan Hassel transformation against a background of subdued snuffing, bass blooping and cymbal shimmering. Here Supersilent sound like the ghost of a jazz quartet. With its discreet moans and tiny gestures, whirs of misty analogue jigs, "3-4" is even more disembodied. Hanken is at his most exposed blowing a wooden flute for the delicate finish. Taken in one sitting, this awesome set will leave the listener astounded, gasped, exhausted and quite possibly confused.

## THE SWIMMING POOL QS ROYAL ACADEMY OF REALITY

BAR-KOOL CORCORAN CD  
BY ED GARDNER

The Swimming Pool Qs came up in Georgia at about the same time as REM and the B-Sides, and were signed to Danny Serfaty's Ge Records. But unlike their contemporaries they were a bit arty and lacked a killer pop hook sound. The Qs never went away, though, and main man Jeff Calder and producer Phil Hadaway, along with the other group members and various guests, worked on this album for the better part of a decade. The result is a surprisingly lush, sumptuous, song cycle overflowing with musical and intellectual ideas, set to production that's Spectator in its density, but far less ham-fisted.

Calder's voice seems amazed by all it describes, which is largely the miracle of life — specifically life lived on the landscape of the US South: its earth, its sky, all of course the Mississippi River. Musically it's a delicate balancing act: one too-loud guitar solo, one misplaced accent, and the record could become deranged. As it is, I might have left off the last song, "Alpha Omega's River," if only because "The Wheel Of The Sun" is such a perfect closer.

Nevertheless, having it there by no means diminishes the record's impact, which is considerably enhanced by mostly saving what has to be said and getting out within four minute songs. The exceptions are the last track and the restorable "Deep South," which would have wound up on The Beach Boys' Post Sounds had Brian Wilson gone up in Georgia.

Calder and Hadaway are a killer team: who else would have thought to start a track ("Wheel Of The Sun") with VI drummer Mike Tucker's patented thudding only to overlay it with multi-tacked Highland piping, and then season it with glass harp? But Calder (sometimes with Hadaway) can also write a melody, as the instantly bonding chorus of "The Radio In Memphis" demonstrates. Royal Academy Of Reality could well acquire the same cult status as enjoyed by Post Sounds and Love's Forever Changes. The Swimming Pool Qs are a working group, and although I don't think their live shows sound like this, anyone who can come up with something so flat-out astonishing should be encouraged.

# The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled



Factory International, London

## An Anthology Of Noise And Electronic

**Musik/Second A Chronology Volume #2** (Sub label SR200 2XCD) is a fascinating two CD round up of rare and unreleased material by a wide spectrum of musicians, spanning nearly 70 years. Firstly it begs the question: what is meant by noise? A sound uplifting to one person might be oppressive to another. Could it be defined by volume, a lack of harmony, or the shock of the new? Compiler Guy-Marc Hivart reminds us, with reference to John Coltrane's *Ascension*, that what was once and differentiated noise is now accepted as subtle harmony. Almost all of the pieces here are either untimpered, or their melodies and harmonies are 'subtle' to say the least.

Volume #2 was criticised in these pages for its documentation, and despite a few typos — one of which finds The Wire's Rob Young promised to membership of Autarch ahead of Rob Brown — and a missing last page, the sleeve notes are informative and well presented. Hivart explains that the idea behind this compilation is to showcase some less obvious practitioners in a wide musical area. He questions arbitrary categorisation, in which lesser known artists can become spuriously labelled as second riders when they are no less worthy of our attention than their more famous peers, he would rather read De Nerval than Bataise, he explains. So, alongside a piece by Luc Ferrari, the impressive 1938 electroacoustic composition *Musik Of The Synthesis* by German-American composer Johannes M. Beyer, about whom little is known. Daphne Dixon helped form the BBC Radiophonic Workshop in 1958 and almost immediately quit, but on Four Acres she sketches a world of serene beauty, punctuated by chattering disruptions. And to the uninitiated, like myself, who associate Perry Grainger with somewhat abstracted arrangements of English folk songs, his *Free Music #1* (For Four Theremins) from 1936 also comes as quite a surprise.

More obviously modern is "On/Off End" by Yoshino Nomo, aka Multichord Ensemble, on which piano playing is fragmented via a laptop. Another track is a litherly untuned version of "Brochus One" by Autarch, which was recorded before their 1993 debut *Incurables*. Although we must allow for quite a bit of subjective compilation of this kind,

"Imagination" by Sam the Revue on piece. Another is a lo-fi, interplay, Captain Beefheart, is represented by "She's Too Much For My Arms" and "My Human Gets Me Blues" from the Arruaghs Festival in 1969: live recordings

which are both rather noisy.

My own subjective highlights are the pieces by Laetech and the late Alan R. Splet, best known for his sound design for the films of David Lynch. His track, "Space Travel With Changing Choral Textures", has closest kinship with his work on *Eraserhead* and is reloaded — by his collaborator and widow Anne Kneiber — to consist of slowed down voices recorded in a chapel on the Scottish side of loch mixed with the sound of an air-conditioning vent. Laetech's "Industrial Ambients", recorded 1980-82, is a collage of factory field recordings from the former Yugoslavia which predates any of the group's releases. The ultimate industrial music, it makes the BBC middle class idealisation of all things industrial — something of which most would have had little or no direct experience — seem rather dead. SPK's "Sluggish", included here, is a reminder of some of the damnest music from that scene. Paradoxically, the crudely recorded "Industrial Ambients" is edited into the vaguest of structures. These rhythms of mass production make us focus on their unknown, silent operators in a way that is inexplicably moving. (MB)

It's conventional to thank God and your mum on a record sleeve, but Pierre Thoma thanks the sewerage system and garbage disposal department of Geneva. Unlike the sewage, Thoma's sounds are untuned — subterranean recordings of normally inaudible processes 'horizontal' to urban life. Thoma is among contributors to *Healing Place* (Mow M03275 CD), an album curated by the Austrian Sound Design Project to coincide with this year's symposium of the World Forum Of Acoustic Ecology in Melbourne. These responses to environmental sound range from those, like Thoma, who structure unmodified recordings, to interventionists like Samuel Pellmar, who transforms the sounds of a summer's day in upstate New York by means of musique concrète techniques, both classical and recent. Ben Kilgusatsu turns a Piccadilly Circus traffic jam into hellish dissonance — a not much charge there. But Jon Drummond's "Actual walk" through Sydney is also surprisingly grim and infernal. A different take on urban sound comes from the UK's Viv Gennep, in one of her "local Strides", as broadcast on Resonance FM. Gennep's affecting performance can be heard either as a still, semi individual voice split apart urban noise, or as a symbiotic duct between her vocalising and a large truck, recorded live in the street. Christopher DeLaurenti also sticks his microphone into

potentially dangerous places with his three minute crash-edited condensation of New Orleans Mardi Gras. Best and simplest is Aaron Kimm's walk along a Vietnamese beach in a downpour — we share his surprise at how beautiful this sounds. (CB)

When Marc Hollander of Alaska Maboul and Honeymoon Killers singer Vénécia Vincent formed Crammed Discs in 1981, their aim was to develop an international roster of musicians whose work would dissolve the boundaries between rock, electronics, pop and indigenous musics. Some appear on the two CD compilation *Crammed Global Soundscapes 1980-88*, which is divided into *Part One: World Faces* and *Part Two: Electronics* (Crammed CRAM113/114 2XCD). Unsurprisingly, it's Alaska Maboul who most fully epitomise the ethos of the Belgian label, mixing European folk and even Philip Jeck like trekked tentacles into their highly individual rock-based music, in which invention is prized over notions of authenticity.

Now the bad news. Despite assessments in the sleeve notes that these compilations claim the heritage of Jim Hendrix, Giedd, Marcel Duchamp and Jean Luc Godard, the *Electrowave* CD is more accurately characterised by the energy-sapping gloom of BBC production values; particularly that trademark of the decade, the gated reverb snare drum. These beats go off like death wages throughout Minimal Compars's "Next One Is Real" and the European, proto-Electro Body Music of "Marselle" by Sand Apart. Even the promised eyebrow-raising sexual assault — to say nothing of the presence of DAF's Robert Gori — fails to prevent Karen Finley's "Girls Of Baboon" from being tedious. In this context the queasy wind-in-the-ears of *Landmann* and characterful pop of The Honeymoon Killers sound peculiarly fresh.

Recorded in 1981, "Gully" finds Hector Zebou and Congolese vocalist Bony Bikiye wanting to sound like Duran Duran. This awful effort stands in stark contrast to their "Nunpe Na Kod" on the *World Fusion* CD. First released on their 1983 *World Fusion* album — with CY on electronics and Fred Frith on violin — it sounded like a remarkable hybrid then and still sounds good now. This CD comes much closer to living up to the vision of Crammed's founders, though song like the turbulent electro-dance of "Bitter" by Jossy Deyhim and Richele Novovic, and the Acoustic influenced strings and percussion of Daniel Seifert's "Un Cerveau", Ethiopian singer Mahmoud Ahmed fronts a sax-led ensemble impressively on "Sidiqishah Negr", dating from

1977. Compare with the later "Boking" by the Congolese singer Poto Daudongo. What, no doubt, was envisaged as a sort of Fourth World fusion sounds like a sweetly sung and smartly played song dragged down by the added synthetic bombast of Linn Drums. Those who follow technological imperatives unquestioningly please take note. (MB)

In September 2001, Austrian cultural activist Stefan Bidner organised an event at Innsbruck's Hagfelsen venue to show local solidarity with the anti-globalisation movement. Called *Electric Pavilion*, the event proved a success for Bidner's "Burnt Für Internationalen Kommunismus" in showcasing disparate sound and visual artists, including Curt Duce and Gellie Rygle. One and a half years later, out comes a compilation called *Electric Pavilion* (Wehrkust Takt MKT04/2003 CD), involving everyone who played at the event, but with no live tracks from the event at all; but which Bidner, as "editor", seems to have released as proof that roughshod hegemony and global pulwiff have only increased since *Electric Pavilion*. Unfortunately the music is mostly limp, predictable Euro Techno with bits of dub chucked in, bar the exception of Waigand & Pettibon's garage punk "Marines Lets Go Go", which sounds like it was recorded during a power cut. (JB)

Burning Shed is an online, on-demand CD-R label and CD-Rip "created by artists for artists" based in Haverhill, MA. On the face of it, producing CD-Rs to order at very reasonable prices would appear a noble, non-commercial project. Yet if the quality of material on *Burning Shed Sampler Two* (Burning Shed No Number CD) is anything to go by, both ends of the burning shed's candle deserve to be, like, burned, to meet some demand, as usual on a label sampler, there's quite a variety of styles, including a strong impetus aesthetic from Cantozoom, Michael Peters and others. But what lacks this sampler stand out is the contrast of lyrics and sounds, as though in the Burning Shed universe interesting words and interesting sounds are not mutually exclusive, but illustrative. Downteat narratives of localised drudgery and loneliness — as on the tracks by Shed founders Tim Bowness and Peter Chivers, as well as Paul Goodson and Alkes Grace vocalise, Sandra D'Heill — run up against similarly pretty yet disturbing industrial samples from Solosson and loops from Darkroom. There's something peculiarly local and 'English Gothic' about the whole enterprise. (JB) ☐ Reviewed by Mike Barnes, Clive Bell and Jake Brown

# PAUL TERMOS

## PAUL TERMOS SESSIONS

### VOLUME 1

XOR CD015 CD

# PAUL TERMOS SESSIONS

## VOLUME 2

XOR CD016 CD

BY BILL STEINMAYER

Released just days before his death in May, these two volumes restate the strengths of rock player Paul Termos as an improviser, eclipsed for years by his emphasis on composition. For listeners outside Helsinki, who first encountered the solo saxophonist on Maarten Aaltonen's *Claudio* LPs in the 1980s, Termos distinguished himself by his unerring ability to animate assemblage and barrel compositional materials. This aspect of his work is revisited on Volume 1, a duo set with pianist Mika Mergelberg featuring two of the pianist's silly chachas, "Kookoo" and "Jumboon." Yet on both volumes — the second pairing Termos with electric guitarist Weli Hilmans — Termos is afforded the opportunity to freely improvise for upwards of half an hour at a stretch.

It is in such extended exchanges where Termos is surprisingly cogent. In his lengthy dialogue with Mergelberg, Termos cogly uses Konti-like turn and phrasing to repeatedly beat the pianist to the verge of conventional jazz cadences, only to lurch or float in another direction. It's a cat and mouse game that Mergelberg obviously finds delightful; and by the end, each musician has turned the tables on the other more than once. Conversely, employing a harder edged tone and approach to him, Termos is more directly challenging to Hilmans, who eventually jetsoons his sleek corping in favor of spiker retorts. At times, the exchanges are almost pugilistic in comparison to the nose-filled gambles Termos and Mergelberg play out.

While only one Termos composition is represented on the two CDs — "Ilokijentor", a blustery theme cranked up to past peeling intensity by Termos and Mergelberg, which then segues unexpectedly into Jerome Kern's "Two Little Little Star" — many of Termos's improvisations reveal his innate organizational predilections. This is more prevalent in his recordings with Hilmans, several of which are built upon long forms or other overt organizational methods. Given the appreciable number of works Termos documented on recordings by Alena, Loos and other notable Outdo ensembles, he may very well be remembered primarily as a composer. Yet, both of these recordings confirm that Paul Termos was also a formidable improviser.

# TOOLSHED

## TOOLSHED

TWISTED NERVE TINGS CD

BY DAVID STUBBS

Based on a monthly musical side project on the part of 808 State/Biting Tongues man Graham Massey, Toolshed is further evidence the Björk collaborator hankering after his avant genre roots, enjoying a sort of middle art-crisis. He's associated here by, among others, Paddy Steer, Richard Harrison and the vocals of Seaming Is. This mini-album features live tracks, opening with a cover of Ennio Morricone's "Phuuz" (from the soundtrack of *The Exorcist 2*), which runs an exuberant gamut taking in Beethoven and The B-

52s. Next up is a genuine cure, a cover of Sun Ra's "Satellites Are Spinning" (from the essential *The Solar Myth Approach Part 2*), which Massey and co spin out well beyond the original's spooky, sketchy three minutes 30 seconds, embellishing its exotic cosmic finery with a wave of vibraphone and Roland organs, all courtesy of Massey himself. It's audacious and not exactly canon-practice to cover Sun Ra, but this works — as does a version of John McLaughlin's 1970 sketch "Marbles," its misty, driving off effect by a fast-moving, kaleidoscopic polyphase.

The last two tracks, both Massey compositions, are reassuringly sunny, "Nonaranzanama" in particular, with its banjo, muffled chime is an end-induced misadventure, while "Gobots" is faintly evocative of the soundworld of Yma Sumac, of lost civilizations and human sacrifices to appease shogoddesses. Among the instruments featured here are one of Massey's old favorites, the kigumelon. Elsewhere, he deploys the Astorlan and the Moog. It's as if he's weaving from the techno-space of 808 State into the lost and discarded futures of 1960s folk music.

# TOWN AND COUNTRY

THIRILL LOCKY THIRILL 138 CD

BY MAX CLARKE

Is the acoustically tilted film release from Chicago multi-instrumentalist Town And Country. Blending contemporary classical composition with sleek jazz and post-rock meandering, the quartet draws a parallel with fellow Midwestern groups such as Rachel's and Tortoise. Members Ben Vika, Liz Payne, Jim Oaring and Josh Abrams met while participating in a series of weekly improvisation sessions, playing alongside such itinerant musicians as Jim O'Rourke. During this time the group began infiltrating the Chicago underground scene, playing live shows in a diverse variety of venues, from conventional rock clubs to art galleries and theaters.

5 further extends the compositional language Town And Country have been developing over the last six years. Opening track "Sleeping In The Midway Star" begins with a dense, resonant drone on bass created before unweaving into a virtuosic thread of friction and gating viol strings. The addition of swirling harmonium, with pervasive consistency provided by handbells and maracas, allow the instruments to loop and tuck under another to form a spacious veil of sound. Avoiding stock shoddy and working entirely with acoustic instruments, Town And Country's reliance on natural form and timbre gives the music a warm, soapy, glumous tone. The album was composed prior to recording, but some tracks were more complete than others when they started recording. They contain spontaneous sections that expose the group's improvis roots, which keeps the music fresh and intense. Contrasting epic, experimental freebuds with concise chamber music, 5 is a diverse album, full of gems blending with key brilliance.

# T RAUMSCHMERE

RADIO BLACKOUT

NOVAMUTE NOVAMUTE CD012

BY JOHN MULVEY

T Raumschmerz's name — essentially the German translation of *The Dreamcoys*, a Wilhelm

Burroughs short story — makes him sound a little more transgressive, or at least interesting, than he actually is. On this, his debut album, the Berlin resident and Shabataput label owner dabbles with a few genres, but is happiest with a kind of hysterical electro-glam.

One suspects T Raumschmerz would rather be boosted as electrojunk, given that most of his publicly focuses on a confrontational, reluctant stance. And sure, there are moments on Radio Blackout where that description makes vague sense: the scolding, buzzing "Rauschessence" and "The Game Is Not Over," if only because the latter features some irresistibly sticky vocals from Miss Kittin, a regular instant on records like this for the past couple of years.

There's something intentionally camp about T Raumschmerz's strenuous attempts to appear aggressive. Recent single "Monstertraktor" and the parts of "The Game Is Not Over" unblessed by Miss Kittin are joyous, knowingly dumb stamps that owe as much to the early 70s as the 80s.

All quite amusing, but for only so long. As Radio Blackout progresses, T Raumschmerz attempts glitchier, more subtle variants on techno, as well as some respectably slowly hip-hop, which reveal him to be much more arduous than his trashy profile suggests. By the end, though, you're longing for something a little harder than his default setting of stately, diverging but ultimately benign control. Also, Elving may be even less aware of his own ridiculousness, but Radio Blackout would be much improved by the sort of scabrous noise he associates with punk.

# TRIO S

TRIO S

ZEPHYRUS ZEPHYRUS

BY DAVID MANDI

Between them, chairlifted Oog Weismann, colliet Jane Scarpantoni and drummer Kenny Wollesen have played with nearly everyone who has set foot on a New York stage in the last ten years. But while it would be hard to predict exactly what a collaboration between these proven session musicians might sound like from credits that include Elton John, John Zorn, the Kamikaze Ground Crew, Jim Smith and The Beeble Bros., their self-titled debut still comes as a surprise.

The disc is a collection of low-key sound paintings about water composed by handleader Weismann. Unlike, say, Charles Hayward's more water-themed songs, which conjure up images of growling decks and stormy night seas, the music of *The S* — as the cool lake washes of the cover *watercolor* suggest — is the very image of calm. According to Weismann, the predominantly acoustic, instrumental pieces "come from perceived melodies from water sources," a phenomenon that "is barely audible but can be heard under the right circumstances".

Accordingly, most of the music was inspired by the "insecurities" of specific bodies of water: a beach off Majorca, the Kamikaze River in Kyoto, the confluence of two streams in Washington state. Even if you haven't seen them, the group's beautifully languid performances evoke their subjects remarkably well. And, as with most good sound paintings, the music coheres as an indivisible thing where picking out the sounds of individual instruments is beside the point.

Nevertheless, the playing here is gerty brilliant, with melodies hinted at rather than trumpeted, and development moving at a flowing, leisurely pace. Metalists are used sparingly, with Wollesen generally employing hand percussion and shakers rather than trap drums, and soft mallets rather than drumsticks. With typical modesty, the major work of the collection, the eight part composition "Anthony's River" (based on a simple melody-fragment that came to Weismann in a dream) clocks in at just under ten minutes. The music works its way into your subconscious to the point where you can almost forget you're listening to it.

# TSURUBAMI

GEKKYUKEKKAICH

STRANGE ATTRACTORS SAARH15 CD

# REBEL POWERS

NOT ONE STAR WILL STAND

THE NIGHT

STRANGE ATTRACTORS SAARH18 CD

BY NICK SOUTHGATE

The Acid Mothers Soul Collective's apical partochianic burps over a karmic asteroid belt and scatters another selection of wacky and wonderfully detritus from their long strange trip. No accident that these two are harvested by the Strange Attractors label of Portland, Oregon, a state known for its sightings of unexplained glowing craft in the sky. Makoto Kawahara is joined by AMT regulars: Nakano Eri and Hiroshi Higashi for the Tsurubami album, and Cetron Casano and Hayato Kasumi for the Rebel Powers album. The latter also features The Wire's David Keenan, guitarist with The Taster Ponies.

The sheer quantity of Kawahara et al's recorded output frames how the listener is meant to encounter this music. It's all but impossible to hear and absorb all the output, partly due to the obscurity of many of the releases, but mostly because there is simply so much of it. A less inspired collective would lapse into the merely formulaic to keep up this work rate. Instead, the long improvised sessions that make up these albums have become rhapsodic performances, where the interest lies in the performance of the ritual itself. As such it is neither necessary nor desirable to attempt to hear and compare all the group's armory. Equally, the artists are freed from concerns of "misfires" repetition or the need to progress. The ritual that has evolved for these group improvisations produces 20 minute plus tracks, rich in texture and colour, but steady in tempo and volume.

Both albums feature two cast members. Gekkyukekkaich overlaps gentle dapples of silky percussion and water-reliant guitar parts. Despite long track lengths, there is minimal crescendo (and correspondingly diminished). All the instruments, especially the guitar, are played so as to mute any total attack leading each piece as a resonant and elemental quality. The Rebel Powers album is a starker work, as the two titles "We Are For The Oak" and "Our God Is A Mighty Fortress" assert with due fortitude. Keenan's bare and howling guitar is the dominant force in the group's armory. It's relentless jangle, an endless, unvarying fall of a propulsive hammer on a diabolic anvil, paces out the march across these desolate and unweaving landscapes.

To find these pieces satisfying, the listener must indulge the performers. A selective sonic

# The Boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

Amalgam, not fusion: John Stevens and Trevor Watts

Four of the five compositions on *Amalgam's* *Innovation* (FMP 11910203 CD) were conceived by drummer John Stevens. He liked to make his presence felt yet, with Stevens' ebullient at the kit, Amalgam is steered here as always by its guiding light, alto saxophonist Trevor Watts. *Innovation* was recorded in November 1974, a time when various forms of high-profile jazz fusion had passed their creative peak and were riding a subsiding wave of fashionability. Amalgam explored common ground underlying improvisatory musics and, while it shared abundantly the surface attractiveness of fusion's highest hits, it was a more profound unit than most. Excellent bassists led the Amalgam foundation—here a prize pairing of Lindsay Cooper and Kent Carter. Pianist Keith Tippett, steeped in soulful township jazz through close association with The Bluebelles, acts as a funky hub, as well as an ingenious conductor of melodic and rhythmic motifs. Ben Quayle's expansive yet tacit accompaniment. Over it all, Watts owns and exerts at its core, often unmistakably his own. Nothing is added to the original *Tanz* LP release and nothing is needed to enhance its satisfying blend of intelligence and sensuousness. (JC)

1973's *FMP 0130* (*Atavistic/Unheard Music Series* UMS/AT244 CD), cut by the trio of *Boomerangs*, Van Howe, Donchik, opens with some super-plum collage from the sticky fingers of Fred Van Howe before Brian Bennett takes loose a volley of staccato cartridge shots from his horn, shells seemingly fed out from 1968's *Machine Gun* session. With the city empire, Van Howe's music dominated the overall feel of the session with shepherding vociferous piano parts that are a red rag to Ian Bennett, here utilizing all manner of pines, percussion and junk alongside his drum kit. Bennett's playing is as energetic and agile-second intestine as ever but his predictably ironic responses to Van Howe's armory of music talk quotations are fairly unimaginative, effectively blurring yucks and raspberries back at the pianist's melodic interjections. Bennett's response isn't anywhere near as qualitatively loaded as Bennett's, instead engaging with the themes as straightforward source material and running algebraic configurations from the bell of his horn with savor-like velocity. But Van Howe and Bennett's clunky, wincing dialogue dominates, making this one of the Unheard Music Series' least vital FMP archive releases to date. Much more rewarding is *Louis Mahler/Larry Statham/Keith Tippett* 1962 session *Im* (*Atavistic/Unheard Music Series* UMS/AT245 CD). Statham is a great British saxophonist who has never really had the attention he deserves due to his commitment to

group-think, working as part of Keith Tippett's *Omni Lodge* project (a deftly outlined grouping that turned up on the legendary *Nurse With Wound* influence list) and playing alongside Peter Brötzmann, Tony Dole, Trevor Watts and as a member of The London Jazz Composers Orchestra. Recent years have seen a concentrated upsurge in activity, with a rare solo side on Emanem and gigs with a new trio featuring pianist Pat Thomas and drummer Mark Sanders. *Im*, a live recording from Berlin's *Totul Music Festival* in 1982, was originally released as a double LP set on SAU Records but due to timing constraints this CD release is missing one track, "Shield". Right from the first splash the three look into a light realm of sound, with Statham building, clumping, circular patterns into muscular imaginings of the arabic dance of some while Tippett works his way out to the furthest reaches of the piano, nudging the group further into virgin terrain. Mahler's drumming injects plenty of swinging force without ever actually stating it and his vocal exhortations help push Statham right over the top, as he breaks into a high singing solo that's as full of the sounds of London traffic as anything by Lol Coobell. (OK)

Constant Displacement (*Drag City* DC245 CD) is a reissue of a solo album by *Wayne Rogers*, which first came out on the guitarist's own *Twisted Village* imprint back in 1999. Rogers was best loved for the weight of his insane string work with basement outfits like *Crysalized*, *Movements*, *Venerable*, *BORIS*, *Magik Hour*, *Wormwood* and, most recently, *Major Stars*. That the composer of *Constant Displacement* is a fairly recent convert of *Thunderbolt* Newman's: explicit 1969 hit "Something In The Air" tags the kind of aesthetic trait that the whole album breathes. It's headbanging psychedelic crunch for most of the disc, with Rogers injecting down some rolling drum patterns before shooting it all through with his unique electric leads, as powerful and primitive as anything blown from the digits of Randy Holden and a few buxies closer to a truly hermetic synthesis of color, sound, shape and movement than either James "Blood" Usher or Neil Hagerty. There is also a couple of nice, almost folk ballads lurking here and there but it's the furious attack of tracks like "Far" and "Wonder", with its beautiful feedback coda, that'll have you hitting rewind every time. (OK)

With *Speechless* (Fred/REF Megacore RERFD04 CD), one of two new reissues on his own Fred imprint, Fred Frith took his sacred solo way from Henry Cow and down the road to becoming a revered improviser, collaborator, composer and leading light of rock's avant garde. The other: *Keep The Dog* (That House We Lived In) (Fred/REF Megacore

RERFD03 CD), collects 1991 live recordings of *Keep The Dog*, when Frith toured for three years before focusing on his *Guitar Quartet*.

*Speechless* features performances from two distinct ensembles, originally kept apart by the physical conventions of the vinyl LP. For the first five tracks Frith is joined by Guggu Chenevise, Margot Mathews, Ferdinand Richard and Jo Thron. The next eight tracks are built around a core of Frith, Bill Lussell and Fred Meher, although a cast of supporting musicians appear on selected tracks. Confusingly this reissue dispenses with the six bonus tracks found on the previous REF CD. While this respects the musical integrity of the original release to *The Residents* Ralph label, for the Frith archive it's a case of less being less, which is a shame, as *Speechless* is regarded not only as one of his best albums, but as a musical watershed.

The original 'side one' of *Speechless* was built around found sound types of street fairs and demonstrations recorded around New York City. This material grounds a sort of sequential improvisation as the players respond to the voices and noises of New York and provide them with their own sombre supporting themes. Frith's engagement with folk traditions comes through and one can hear this album as a New York urban folk music, the tape recorder turning the Big Apple into an instrument and partner of endless complex musicality.

"Side two" contains pieces played by augmented line-ups of *Messiah* either presented as played ("Domane De Ploussou") or subsequently altered and added to, as the studio "Maverick". The track "Speechless" is itself based on a recording of the passive pulse of a faulty water tap and an equally faulty interview tape, playing both sides at once, producing a rhythm and tone of speech free of intelligible meaning.

*Keep The Dog* is a double CD compiled in Frith's own words, "to recreate the feeling of a typical two-set concert while including as much of our repertoire as possible". By the time of recording, the group had been playing together for two years and their empathy as players is in abundant evidence. To date this episode in Frith's always prolific and diverse career has been under-documented and is beautifully showcased on this immaculately recorded and mastered CD. The group's remit was to wander over Frith's catalogue, and tracks like "True Love" (from *Chap Arrive! The Price*), "The Truce" (from *The Henry Kaiser collaboration* of 1983, who *News* *Ensemble*) or "Track And A Hard Place" (from 1990's *Alone*) prove the worth of the enterprise. Given the quality of this set, Frith's followers can only conjecture at what contractual wrangling or tedious agendas have kept these

tapes from public ears for 12 years and be glad to finally have access to this essential double CD's worth. (NS)

Bob Dylan was a great instrumentalist on poet *Allen Ginsberg's* album *First Blues*, released on producer John Hammond's own label in 1982. Another Ginsberg album, also entitled *First Blues*, was recorded in a room at New York's Chelsea Hotel by folk-archivist Harry Smith and released by Folkways in 1981. This is the one reissued as *New York Blues: Rags, Ballads & Hammer Songs* (Locust 1012 CD). No Dylan, although he did persuade the Beat legend to take up singing; this is just Ginsberg and his harmonium fix. Besides, Ginsberg, a powerful master in public of apt protest verses such as the classic *Howl*, was certainly no singer in conventional terms and his harmonium technique was basic. Some have cited Dylan's prompting. Yet, once you've survived the initial jolt, the economic delivery sets its own terms for listening, and anyone seriously interested in Ginsberg's work will want to hear his account of adapting song forms to fit characteristic tales of speedtrains, journeys, Tibetan Buddhism, poetry readings and guitar-playing boyfriends, whimsical observations and barbed political comment. It's also an annex to the invaluable legacy of Harry Smith, who somehow succeeded in casting Ginsberg as urban folk artist. (JC)

Dutch trombonist *Walter Wierbos* is currently a member of *Misha Mengelberg's* Instant Composers Pool and the *Marten Arto* Ensemble, as he was in 1982, when his solo album *Wierbos* (DWA 024 CD) made its initial appearance on vinyl. It has featured in a range of other groupings but, as confirmed by his second solo recording in the mid-1990s, *Xenobes* (JCP), Wierbos is a self-sufficient musician fully capable of sustaining interest with 'bone alone. Paul Rutherford's *The Gentle Horn Of The Bourgeois* (Emanem CD) set the highest standard for solo trombone improvising and Wierbos falls short of that peak in terms of sheer spontaneous inventiveness and daring, but Wierbos is a fine and highly listenable set, musically substantial with minimal reliance on contrived effects, despite titles such as "Plock-Pock" and "Oink-Oink". Wierbos' ruminations in the trombone's more obscure recesses, but he also draws regular tangential support from the instrument's historical uses and from the expressive characteristics of the unsuited human voice. 12 relatively brief pieces plus a longer track, recorded as a concert in December 2001, form a valuable addition to the old programme. (AC) [Reviewed by Julian Cowley, David Reenan and Nick Southgate]



tourism is simply not possible. The open pedal delicacy of Gekkyukabachi provides the warmer welcome, with its opportunity for lazy-minded transport through its light-absorbed tones. But the menacing intensity of Robert Powers lives longer and deeper in the mind.

# CHRISTIAN VANDER MAGENTA PRÉSENTE OFFERING

**SEVENTH REK X00 AKC2**  
BY KIM HOLLINGS  
indicating a moment of transition from Magenta's original Earth mission and the beginning of Christian Vander's first true solo project, *Offering* originally appeared in 1986. Dedicated to the memory of John Coltrane, a strong influence in the move away from the staidest, messianic of rock stars and Orson's with the polyphonies of Stravinsky and Carl Orff that characterized the earlier Magenta sound, it glazes in a looser, more improvisational approach to playing. A prodigious percussionist who once described his drumming in terms of a total assault upon the audience, Vander now turns his attention to keyboards and developing his gymnastic vocal technique.

The result, especially on the swirling piano trio and electronic variations of the title composition and the spaced-forward momentum of Earth, combine a lightness of touch with a driving commitment to musical exploration. If listeners have the stamina to come along for the ride, so much the better. Four years later a second *Offering* album was released, extending the meditation on Coltrane's legacy still further. Now released as the principal constituent of a four-disc box, together with a prolonged, fairly respectful reading of Coltrane's own "Out Of This World" boasting an elaborately reflective drum solo from Vander himself, *Offering* here emerges in its entirety not only as a generous acknowledgement of a musical debt but also as a remarkable statement of intent. It is, however, over the course of the fourth disc, given over to a reimagined version of the 1993 release *A Fresh*, that these two angles come together. Sung primarily in Korean, Vander's own inverted tones, and delivered by a striped battery of voices, keyboards and percussion, this is deep and accomplished musical drama at its finest. A sustained ascension into a world of its own devising, the graceful movement from "Cosmos" to the glimmering title track embraces music and theatre as a purified ritual, something that Coltrane himself might well have understood.

# VARIOUS WOODEN GUITAR

**LOCUBIT MUSICA LOCUBUS 33**  
BY DAVID MANDL  
Released in a numbered edition of 1000, *Wooden Guitar* is a collection of "deliberate," bringing together four talented, contemporary acoustic guitarists very much in the John Fahey/Robbie Basho/Neoma Records mould. While keeping the tracks short, these would have allowed for contributions from far more artists, the producers opted instead for very lengthy pieces, most of them between 14 and 21 minutes long. The result is a collection of drifting, strand of consciousness tracks demonstrating the great holistic possibilities of this tradition-soaked and very American form.

The performances featured here — by Virginia

based Jack Rose, East German-born Steffen Bock-Jungens, Japanese free improviser Tetu Aoyama and San City Girls' Sir Richard Bishop — are all stripped down and overtly free. References to the Tokyo state abound, most obviously in Rose's furiously circular finger-picking and densely woven chord tapestries. Bock-Jungens's playing also betrays a heavy Tokyo influence (his name was actually adopted from Basho Records as a tribute, just as Basho had adopted it from 17th century Japanese poet Matsuo Basho), but with more single note oriented picking and Indian-influenced drones than Rose's.

Aoyama's contribution leaves, appropriately, more in the direction of modern free playing, like a less-than-Hans Reich, or the pervasive, alyricism from Fred Frith's legendary Guitar Solos collections. Unlike the other players here, he's as interested in exploring the sounds of the guitar itself — escaping the strings, 'playing' the resonance of the body — as the notes he can wring from it. Bishop's track is the most direct piece of the bunch — a slow, wrenching blues number accelerating into occasional North African-flavoured turns it is Day Graham. The disc also has a short track, and is most light-hearted, by Steffen Bock-Jungens. With its studied, repetitive, almost Asian plucking, it bridges the gap between the traditional finger-picking style that is the collection's main focus and the exotic styles that it aspires towards.

# THE DAVID S WARE STRING ENSEMBLE THREADS

**THIRTSY GAT THIRTSY 37 CD**  
BY JULIAN COWLEY  
Saxophonist David S Ware's yearning to work with strings, a resource he identifies with "a subtle world of consciousness and spirit", appears to have come to fruition with this string ensemble project, although he hasn't ventured too far from home. He's surrounded with familiar and sympathetic souls — bassist William Parker, Matt Moner on viola, drummer Guillermo E. Brown, Matthew Shipp rising from the shadows of mellow string lines his King Triton Pro X, and violinist David Bernard Romaine.

Threads is mixed in character and results, a decidedly odd fusion. Instead of the blended horn and string fusion you might anticipate, those elements are mostly separated out, kept apart in a way that seems almost perverse. Accepting this division of available resources, there are unequivocally successful moments, but there's also ample room for head scratching. The opening track "Aranda Rotator" swells into oceanic dissolve around Ware's plaintive tenor, Brown's cimbalé finish creating waves over the ensemble deep. It's tempting to conclude early on that Ware's attachment to the Coltrane legacy has induced him too readily to the ranks of Meschic immersion. The long title track is essentially a string track, a slow crawl heavily drenched in Górecki-like melancholia, expressively pulled by Moner in particular, but too laden with formulae of sorrow. Despite the five viola player's efforts "Caravel Of Lightness", virtual strings to the fore, smokes of movie soundtrack filler.

On the plus side, there's the two part "Wave". Its grating horn and drum duels might seem out of place for this project but they offer solidly,

while all around strings melt into that insubstantial world of consciousness and spirit. The high point without question is "Sulfic Passages", with Brown and Parker's irresistibly funny (and underpinning) bawdier loop-the-loop interplay between. Moner and Romaine, while Shipp repeatedly suspends a falling ladder of glimmering chords in mid-air. One to catch, but where's Ware?

# CHRIS WATSON WEATHER REPORT

**TOUCH TONIC CD**  
BY JIM HARTNIS  
The cats in my apartment rarely pay attention to anything on the stereo, preferring to gaze through the window at the birds visiting the small water dish in the garden. But Chris Watson's *Weather Report* has caused much excitement this afternoon, as the bird calls from his field recordings confuse the cats into thinking that just maybe there's a bird in the house. But Watson did not design *Weather Report* for feline amusement, as the terrifyingly deep whump from the fluttering wings of some unknown small part attests.

While his previous releases had been collections of fragments that emphasized the specificity of each sound, *Weather Report* offers more of a catalogue through a subtle, but certainly noticeable collaging of material. In both circumstances, the difficulty in this artwork emerges in his choices; and here Watson's are impeccable. Through collaging techniques, he contextualises his recordings into dramas about the impact of weather upon the habitats of all of God's creatures. He offers three distinct chapters representing the three distinct ecosystems of Kenya's Masai Mara, a Scottish Highland glen and an Icelandic glacial. Within his portrait of the African savanna, the native fauna are realistic. Owing his seamless construction of 14 hours of sound down to 16 minutes, he uses variously where in anticipation of a crack of thunder, which immediately unleashes a tonnage of rain; a large carnivore pants after mauling a wild pig; an unbroken conversation between two African rain announces the only human presence beyond Watson's well-tuned ears.

The differences between the African recordings and the European ones are stark, as the Scottish landscape alternates between the busy-ness of early autumn, with birds frantically seeking around as if anxiously awaiting their yearly vacation stop, to the grey drear of winter, where rain and wind dominate. The Icelandic recordings are even less humane, with the slow crawling of ice giving way to eerie sustained meanings that sound like anything but natural phenomena.

# KENNY WHEELER DREAM SEQUENCE

**PS 1014 CD**  
BY TOM PURCHARD  
The first chord change announces that this is a collection of Kenny Wheeler tunes full of the barren harmonies that spread like sand across the trumpet/composer's oeuvre. Fine if you like sand; but while the leader's skills as a writer are well regarded in jazz circles, his composing clouds its real skill as an instrumentalist, both in register and performance. This album, on Evan Parker's label — the result of a long association between the saxophonist and trumpeter — was

recorded by various line-ups, from duo to sextet, over a period of eight years, and with those sessions and all those years in mind, it sounds like a labor of love and a debt of friendship: warm, placid and private. So private, in fact, that the musicians spend much of the disc playing to themselves. Wheeler's long, long structures keep musicians' eyes glued to the page, and the results often sound like a read-through rather than a performance. Just as those structures demand intellectual attention before they permit impulsive creation, so their endlessness subverts any feeling of expectation or arrival.

Wheeler's pieces often sound like long strings of compositional devices rather than unfolding musical phrases, and such a framework can only boggy a similar result in the improvising. So here, Wheeler's fluid, gauzy trumpet is denied the winding lyricism that it can breathe over simpler material, and, outlying every harmonic change, the player spells words out instead of singing them. It's no coincidence that the album's best piece is a quartet version of Ellington's "A Flower Is A Lovesome Thing", the performance actually freestanding and intertwined like the best bits of Wheeler's earlier music. For Large And Small Ensembles and Angel Song.

# JAH WOBLE & DEEP SPACE FIVE BEAT

**30 HERTZ 30-HZCD03 CD**  
BY NICK SOUTHGATE  
Bassist Jah Wobble started his 30 Hertz label in 1997 out of a desire to escape major label tyranny. Their constant demand for more of the same is far too restrictive for an artist as diverse and prolific as Wobble. The dividends have been handsome, allowing him to release Celtic, orchestral and spoken word albums, not to mention Moham Laila's *Thay/Lostan reggae*.

Deep Space means a group of collaborators familiar from previous 30 Hertz releases into a new type of unit, one described in Wobble's sleeve notes as an "Aunt Gae Boggie Band Fully Realised". The music fully justifies the claim. Five Beats is composed of five kind of the award given with the heart of a kick-ass group. The title track, "Five Beats (Parts I & II)" is delivered in two giant salsas totalling 30 minutes of muscled warm guitar agility that dance mockingly around a lulling time signature.

"Just Me & Phil" is a subtle duo of ever more muted drums and bass, both played by Wobble, and Philip Jack's tumblers. As it progresses, the drums fade and the bass becomes more organic, creating a folk motor beat beneath the cello's undulating sound washes.

Similarly successful are "Jock, Drums, 2 Beases", with Mark Sanders's drumming leaving Wobble free to concentrate on weaving his doubled bass parts. "6 Beat" (like "Five Beat Part II") is a 21 minute piece with an unusual wide section comprising Harry Beckett's trumpet and the pipes of Gae Bell and Jean-Pierre Rasia, and Chris Cooker's guitar. Cooker, Bell and Rasia provide a stately choral bulk beneath Beckett's thrilling trumpet explorations. The album's sole vocal track comes last, when Ceb-Tab-hage joins Sanders and Wobble. Her dub-cut vocalising is as able an accompaniment as any of the instruments used elsewhere. Further proof of the joyous tightness of the premise behind Wobble's Deep Space unit. □



# Avant Rock

Reviewed by David Keenan

## THE ANOMOANON ASLEEP MANY YEARS IN THE WOOD

TEMPORARY RESIDENCE TR154 CD

The Anomoanon are a family-based unit assembled around the core of guitarist and vocalist Ned Oudrum and featuring his brother Will, Will's bandmate Dave Heuserman and David Michael Carter on viola, as well as Jack Carmel on drums, Willy Medaen on bass and Adam Stith on guitar. Ned wrote the bulk of *Asleep Many Years After the Births of his son and daughter*, and the songs have an unsophisticated lo-fi warmth to them, not to mention a lowered emotional guard and an unselfconscious flow. Ned's vocals are similar to Will's, but minus the hellfire, and the recording feels closest to a backpacker howl, as the choir raise their voices above swells of sliding strings in good-natured ensemble retellings of familial apocrypha. It's all real nice, and though it's difficult to see why anyone would actually want to own it, it's hard to dispute that its existence is a good thing.

## THE EXPLODING MEET NIGHTSHADE 30 YEAR SMOKE

COFFEE TABLE EDITIONS NO NUMBER CD

No information at all on this great disc of group conceptions for electric guitar led by guitarist and composer Mark Kennedy. Kennedy has a deeply personal voice as his instrument; looking furtive, spectral tones from the perimeter of form, whether engaging with small bands of tremolo-induced feedback over a field recording of storm scenes (or maybe a disgruntled audience?) or tracing the kind of arcing vapour trails that Loren Mazzacane Connors regularly leaves in his wake. Most of the tracks feel like some structured improvisations, plotting a course through dry, arid landscapes and scraps of resonant melody. On "Northern Floor" Kennedy punches little sheets of electrical feedback through a flimsy background of feedback and chirruping note patterns; while on tracks like "Black Rainbows" and "Capricornicome" (Glasto: Dancing in the Wake Of Greg Allmar) (fantastic title) he falls into a subtle snail that betrays a working knowledge of various 70s stadium behemoths. From out of nowhere, a good one.

## THE FIRST PERSON TO SEE AN ELEPHANT TOUJ EST FACTICE

TUQUIMANE TR07 CD

Doug Kent first originally founded The First Person To See An Elephant in San Francisco after he quit his punk group The Gods Hate Kansas. They're now based in New York, and this is their second record for Relapse. Apparently they retain deep loyalties to the sham community, but on the evidence of this disc — primarily made up of downer Country ballads that fall somewhere between "Ricochet" and Lou Barlow and the black troubadour stylings of Richard Buckner — they keep them well hidden. While the majority of the songs are nicely conceived swells of indigenous roots music illuminated with fragile, lucid guitar, they come with a heap of extraneous stylistic

baggage that only confuses the whole issue. The opening 18 minute track is a beauty, featuring the kind of slow languor of electricity that Chevalantides' guitarist Christina Carter has made her own, but it's never followed up on. Meanwhile the group cut up frontier bawls like "The Ghost Foot Of March 24th, 2001" with long cellular drones and even Sleepy-style off tempo. Individually tracks work well but the CD would be even nicer if the group could somehow integrate their various approaches. At the moment they sound too much like a bunch of fare playing in different directions.

## FLYING SAUCER ATTACK FSA TAPES VOL 1: UNRELEASED LIVE

WVF WVF04 CD-R

The bulk of this first volume in an ongoing series of raids on Brazil group Flying Saucer Attack's archives is taken up with "PK Blues," an explosive collage of live improvisations, song fragments and generally unidentifiable static culled from various live dates during 1994. It's easy to forget just how formidably heavy FSA were back in the day, and this makes a great companion volume to *Copius Hermeticus*'s earlier archival live release in *Search Of Spaces*. Also included is a pounding take on the traditional folk tune "She Moved Through the Fair" which is almost completely dismembered by an unyielding drone, a rehearsal jam from 1994 and a live education of one of their greatest tracks, "The Season Is Out," from their first self-titled LP. It all comes wrapped in a beautiful shrunken catnip sleeve.

## GRAVANZIA ROOM 314 SESSIONS VOL 1

GRAVANZIA NO NUMBER

"It's his boogie sound quality" trumpets the sleeve note. It's one take live from one of these London based bands. "It distorts and hits the red. There's no proper track listing. It's infinite and offensive in parts. It sounds like a bunch of stoners just playing anything they like. Exactly." That's a lot of bad, and while the sonic maverick don't quite live up to the mouth-watering boasts, there's still enough drooling to L4 enlightenment to keep the whole thing stoked from beginning to end. While vaguely Progressive and resolutely cheap keyboards set up zones of watery fun, three guitars combine with the kind of loose cumulative force of pro-hip No Waves nudging their way through assorted Terry Jacks covers. The drums sound like a set of upturned buckets with compassed cardboard for cymbals while the vocals, an passages that may or may not be "the 'benic' wonder" of "I Can See The Fishwife," approximate a legion of howling dervishes. No wonder they look as pleased with themselves on the back sleeve.

## THE HEADS AT LAST

SWEET NOTHING SN00005 CD

This Bristol based acid rock quartet have always worn their 'born loser' credentials proudly across

their foreheads, with album titles like *Everybody Knows His Got Nowhere* and a visual aesthetic that struts in the face of temporal relevance. Yet for British devotees of vintage mindbending stonies they have long provided a lone, hairy refuge. Despite their everyman, there remains a steady demand for Heads music, and *At Last*, an official live bootleg, helps plug the gap between albums. Recorded straight to tape in their rehearsal room, it's a good quality run through their autumn 2002 live set, with great splurges of wah-wah, tippy keyboards and a rhythm section that deals in hammer blows and of slicks. Imagine The Groundhogs fronted by a maniacal supermarket checkout clerk and you'd be more than halfway there.

## SCOTT HORSFORTH 8 GUITARS

QUICKSILVER QUICKSILVER CD

Horsforth is a young Australian composer intent on furthering the delugues first opened up by minimalist composers like Steve Reich and Terry Riley via technology that apes and others access to the atomic structure of sound. On 8 Guitars he manipulates the sound of eight players, including celebrated avantists Orrin Ambrach and Brendan Allenby, generating self-perpetuating patterns that slowly build up steam across two 20 minute tracks. Horsforth manages to ward his source material to such a degree that you'd have had pushed to identify a single guitar, never mind eight; and though those snared by the cover shot of an orchestra of string slingers including the bandstand might be a little bit disappointed, if you stick with it long enough the accumulative effect is every bit as cross-eyed. Horsforth's slow-blooming ram brings out all kinds of cellular detail, with little double helix dancing and deterring dotted pattern patterns.

## PELT PEARLS FROM THE RIVER

WVF WVF06 CD

Pearls From The River represents the improvisory tie Pelts first all-acoustic outing. It's an absolute beauty, further consolidating the huge steps towards unmediated access to internal landscapes that they took on their last double set, 2001's *Ayahuasca*. Recorded in a trailer over two days in their front room, it opens with Mike Gough and Jack Rose plucking patterned banjo tracks that sing with locomotive motion through "Up The North Fork," while Pat Best sinks tetrachordic cat o' tails deep into it. The title track's reach is even stealthier, factoring in Eastern European klezmer influences via the prophetic wail of Gough's folk work or, say, a bowed, four stringed Indian drone instrument. Behind his Best uncovers some serpentine bass, while the dancing percussive tones generated by Rose's accordion 12 string make it sound closer to a harmonized dulcimer. The closing "Road To Cowenabed" is one of Pelts' most beautiful creations, with bass and tamboursa summoning huge lurches of drone that project Rose's penetrating six string struts over skyward.

## SPIRITUALIZED AMAZING GRACE SANTUARY GANP014 CD

The myth of Jesus Pierce as an esoteric spiritwalking genius is one of the firmest and most delicious clichés in recent musical mythology. Rather he's a creative plagiarist, never more so than in *Specimen 3* years, alongside his shadow Sonic Boom. He lifted bits wholesale from groups like The MC5 and The Stooges and translated them via drones, punk primitive technique and exuberant force of vision. If anything his songwriting has ossified as Spiritualized have grown, his lyrical concerns reducible to a mindless recycling of "I love you but I'm so wasted — Jesus help me (if you exist)" over the same three peaced chords. It's the same deal with *Amazing Grace*, a bunch of elementary garage and gospel tracks with corny rockstep titles like "Oh Baby," "Never Get Back" and "Lord Let It Rain On Me," the latter — born its title onwards — sounding like a by-product amalgam of at least four previous Pierce songs. Although Amazing Grace is heavier and more rockist than previous records, Pierce still falls back on the genre's "singing shorthand of big orchestral arrangements and gospel choirs in order to breathe life and emotional significance into the slightest of rudimentary, cliché-riddled material. This is done inflated to whole new levels of bombast.

## VARIOUS MUSIC FROM THE MOTION PICTURE LOST IN TRANSLATION

EMPEROR NORTON EMP0005 CD

The soundtrack to Sophie Coppola's follow-up to *The Virgin Suicides* again more features the specific French electro duo Air, alongside rudi tracks from Death In Vegas and Squid. Rather, but the highly recommended presence of four new tracks by Kevin Shields of My Bloody Valentine, his first new material in 12 years, makes this pretty much indispensable. That said, Shields hasn't chosen to completely blow his cover on someone else's soundtrack. All four tracks feel closer to minor post-MBV sketches than to the rollercoaster melange of plush electronics, fuzz and polyrhythms he described as his work in progress in his invisible *Jubilee* (The Wire 181). "City Girl" is the only non-instrumental track and it's a classic piece of languorous Shields psych pop, this time virtually shorn of distortion or any audible studio trickery. Supported by Shields' idiosyncratically voiced and oddly mediating chorals, it sounds a bit like "Cupid Comm" from MVR's 1988 album but anything. "Geocody" splits repeating cells of polyrhythmic riffs to create a slow-bubbling late night drive. "Autobus" is a simple guided guitar instrumental shaken by a high velocity buzz. But "Are You Awake?" is the weirdest of the bunch, a short, rhythmic piece propelled by electro bass, drum machine and a morphing nursery rhyme melody, if you're left feeling near the woe, you also get "Serenades" from 1991's Loveless by way of consolation and, better still, The Jesus And Mary Chain's "Just Like Henry". It still sounds great. □



# Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

## A ROCKET IN DUB IF MUSIC COULD TALK

TRACIA TROTT CO.

De first impression, German unit A Rocket In Dub's debut for Trac-a-label is a label known for any, minimalist dance music as perfect and pointless as vacuum-matted plastics — seems like a series of colourless exercises in delay, slightly but somehow sharp. But ARD's extra-dry funk, pieced together with deep bass, rhytmy hi-hats and Casio stabs, warms up the drums drop out, breaking into a sweat that's less a result of effort than some omnipresent humidity seeping into the grooves, and possibly exacerbated by the groove's influence. Chords condense into foggy shapes, pools of bass fall, and all the treble tones turn to delicate rivulets. On track five, a muted trombone springs out of the soggy soil, opening up a surprising channel leading back to the music's source.

## BROOKS & DANI SICILIANO WANDERING

MANITIS MANITIS 12"

## WILLIS PAPER & STONE

OTR 0760427 12"

On "Wandering," featured last year on Brooks's debut album, Dani Siciliano and the young Midlands talent whip up a gorgeous tune out of truncated vocal samples, demure guitar strumming and rocky clinking like a game of pick-up sticks goes awry house-patented but resolutely unforced, it's as meandering as it can be as it scatters from clip to clip. Brooks's "Routes & Boundaries" mix melts the track into a weirdly thin Polish-influenced crawl of languid chord stabs and deftly edited, all peppered with a four-star restaurateur's menu of pots 'n' pans percussion, while Drew Daniels' Salt Ark. This mix slows things down even further.

Adding the track from metachords and then carefully setting each one ablaze with the sparks from his stripped, hollowed samples. For Garage band 673, Brooks renders soul singer Willis to patchy effect. His "Paperstone" remix of the title song drags along at mid-tempo despite the role of brittle hard drums, and Willis's drifty delivery sustains the structure. His "Solstice Beats" remix, though, pitches everything up into a fizzy house tempo, throwing off drum thumps, whistles and cut up vocals in the same way a whippy dog shakes off water.

## JJ FUCHS STICK IT IN T'WIDDLE

23 TQ24 12"

It's difficult to decide whether this is stupid or staged. At first, when Beggs's JJ Fuchs begins singing, the best thing he can do is wail (that's a real, mean and a howl command). "I'm gonna stick it in the middle" over a fast, pop-rising bassline, it's hard not to wonder naively if we're in for an entire subgenre of electro-funk crossovers adopting Jamie Lidell's demerol approach to R&B. But in the second verse, when Fuchs hits the phrase "I can't stop it then now," he wraps each syllable like wet lard around the words, mewing as happily as a cat rickling

kitchen snacks, and it's virtually impossible not to be won over. That's about the point when you notice the strange string wamps, wailing more to chamber music than disco, turning up like grass between strobing lights, utterly out of place. It's only — in that so wrong way — that you're even willing to come him putting this out as a one-sided single.

## OLIVER HACKE POLAR

TRACUM V39 12"

With this new single from frequent Traum and Lipser contributor Oliver Hacke, RRR's label takes a turn away from abstraction and towards the dancefloor, with more than a hint of couch input. Kampack's pop indulgences helping to guide this. Like many of this man's most efficient products, it's difficult to discuss. On the one hand, nothing ever really happens — but, ah, such sweet nothingness. Both tunes here, the deceptively titled "21-31" and "12-31" (same, they're long, but not that long), begin with the fuzzy floppy wave but come to expect from computer-based minimal techno, all manner of scapings and blips creating suggestive rhythms around an insistent lock drum. But blushing chords slowly enter, and then a boss hold as tenderly as if Hacke had only just discovered it, and angels letting it go. The bass line of "21-31" shows a fair debt to disco, even if nothing else — hammered overtones, husky glitches — could be mistaken for disco. "12-31" begins in more subdued fashion, chirping like a 22nd century cuckoo clock, until phantom strains of New Order's "Procession" filter warily into the background, suggesting an entirely different kind of timekeeping.

## OVE-NAXX BULLETS FROM HABIKINO CITY HXCC

SOCC 90C0004 CD

Japan's De-Naxx, recording under a name he reportedly chose for its medicinal reasons, represents the first CD release on DJ/rapture's Top Records, and it's a corker. The Osaka artist mashes up dancehall reggae, hardcore punk, traditional Japanese instrumentation, cinematic swing jumps and drill 'n' bass mayhem into a hyperkinetic music of changes that cracks open breakcore's hard cut to reveal a sparkling, grade-A inferno, all razor sharp violence and flesh. The EP opens with "Wabosai Valence", a punchy reggae number that fuses squelchy synthesizer bass with Japanese strings — part Sienke, part Ozmo Rascaz — before settling into a DSP-riddled blur of snubbing series. The rest of the record comes from there in the discoidal samples run raw stabs of "Sex-Drug-Breakcore" into the gaudy blur and chopped up growls of "Mibansu" into the megged-up spinning tops of "Doo-Neosus A-Grinder", which sounds like a doomy digital update of Raymond Scott. The best thing about the record is its unpredictability. Though never championing class for disco's sake, De-Naxx keeps things moving forward, looping back and

loopkrogging over themselves in a restless lunge toward perpetual motion, as far from generic dance music's codified forms as can be.

## PHONG SU WINTERMUTE

KOMPART POPS 12"

One of the cheekiest new game names this year has to be Tim Piny's cottage "Neuromanticism", which identifies a dance-oriented style of New Pop in the Microhouse of artists like Supersitcher and Lumeo. How strange, then, that Phong Su's "Wintermute", surely one of the most ecstatic recordings ever to emerge from the label (and, not incidentally, the second release on Kompart's Pop sub-label), makes reference to William Gibson's Neuromancer. As tangled as the web of associations appears, all the pleasure here is right on the surface. Both the original and Burger/Vest versions bludgeoned glassy synths and space-squid vocals as overwhelming as bright sun on snow. Supersitcher's mix, curiously enough, remains eerily, hardly the slightest pop the artist is known for. The best thing here, though, is Wintermute's pop/disco/Rhouse tune "The 21st Century," a fine melodic swoon of club-washed chords, gleaming string motifs and an unabashed infatuation with fashion. What could be more New Romantic?

## ROSWELL/BREATHER GOODYBYE HATED/REALISER

REALISER/REALISER 012"

Once you get past the entirely unappealing cover art — the awful Chicago typeface, dull greys, a kind of Satanic-looking African tribal woman with burning eyes — Roswell's "Goodybye Hated" turns out to be not at all the generic Industrial Techno you might have expected. Sure, it's as grim as the title implies, and the ominous movie snippets ("We are waiting time on coronavirus") are the kind of go-fuck-homework not heard since Witches. But there's something truly beautiful, in the best way, in the title track's uneasy ambivalence and the interplay between grunge and electro-patterned beats. Monopson's "Love Of The Bending Kind" remix is pure Techno Sturm und Drang, eventually burying the downtempo in squalls of distorted orbets. Breather's "Finaler" gives a Gothic update to Consumed-on Plastikman, shrouding a minimal, Adonis pulse in a gloomy wash of charcoal colored noise, but it never manages to get truly scary.

## 76-79 I NEED YOUR LOVE

UNITED 12"

The already named 76-79 launch new Sheffield label Unit with "I Need Your Love", the follow up to the recent "57 Herd LP" on their 76-79 label. What is it with these guys and numbers? If these tunes were equations, they'd be something like the search for the square root of a negative number, so unpleasant is their brand of reductionist funk. Silence is the coefficient here, multiplying these beats and disco samples and sending them

scuzzing into the void. On "Move In Close", a minimalist lock drum and handclap figure connects the dots across a great emporium, while sped up, filtered vocals make the link between Chicago House and The Chigriums. The title track jabs a snarled-bass bassline into the belly of a bass track while a crowd sample comes out in distress. "The last", the most straightforward track here, renounces Dark Park full of Windy City bluster.

## TBN202 FINGER NAILS

NOODMAN NDRIS001 12"

Barcelona's NoDman debuts with local producer TBN202's brassy, gasting "Finger Nails", a charmed chunk of eight-bit punk that nods in one direction toward Adult's morbid synth dregs, and in the other to more embracing electrics, like that of My Robot Friend. The title track, featuring the shoeing, whining Barcelona singer Nodm, patches together videogame plays, brittle beats and the requisite recordings, but its sedemining rhythms and overall spunkiness sit above the pattern it uses. TBN202's "Hauptstadt/Köln" offers a throwaway bit of big black (or perhaps black) bombast, while referencing a Dead Kennedy's title. Chica/John Spencer battles the track with an unremitting barrage of hi-hats, mechanical complaints and three-dotted snare cracks. The record's surprise comes courtesy of Prelude 73's Di 202 ("Dos Dedos"), who turns aluminum foil into crinkly open paper in a remarkable act of transubstantiation. The latter's list analogues squelches and shined details bear a distinct resemblance to the work of his partner, but the gorgeous keyboard line is a touch of his own.

## VARIOUS SCHAFFELFIEBER 2

KOMPART CD005 CD

For years, Catalogue label Kompart and its sublabels have been championing a boogie subgenre of techno's shuffling, one-two punch. Called Schaffel, or shuffle, it lopes along with chaotically great, thumping like a happy labrador's tail or a loped metronome: dum-de-dum-de-dum. Kompart's second compilation of Shufflewerk (which, sadly, is unnamed) collects 11 variations on the theme, offering spring-loaded tunes from the likes of Supersitcher, The Dots and Michael Meyer.

The tunes fall into two main categories. There's the gangsta waltz of Henry Brown, Nams and Node 1, a gritty, bass-heavy track that suggests the urban dandy's saggy gait as a badge of defiant leisure. And then there's the more narrative style of Westerman, Mikkel Metel and The Dots, whose swirling synths suggest psychedelic love dreams reeled and cut into colourful sweetmeats. The pop hit here is T Rumschneiders's dulcet mix of Kariel's "Silence", instead of his usual monster truck-driving mentalism, he offers husky female vocals. Stenobility synth leads and girly roving low end — a salubry for tired techno listeners in need of a little mothering. □

# Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

## BURNING SPEAR STUDIO ONE PRESENTS CRASHING RECORD CD

### PRINCE JAZZBO PEPPER ROCK STUDIO ONE PEPERNO CD

Although this Burning Spear debut bears the credit "produced by Clement Dodd", no doubt Winston Rodney would claim otherwise. Only recently he made a deal between Cassette and Saul Jazz for a "best of" collection, possibly prompting the Bontford Road Don to stifle back with the matelotee release of Studio One Presents, together with the equally impressive follow-up *Rocking Time*. But neither are straight releases, as both come with different tunes to the originals. More remarkably, on Presents, there suddenly appears a totally unrelated disco mix version of Spear's, and maybe reggae's, supreme tune, the timeless "Door Peep (Shut 'Not Enuff)", replace with a data version that we are hearing for the first time. 1969 saw Spear's first venture into the studio and "Door Peep" was included in his first session. The story of its genesis has never been told, but one thing is undisputable: the finished album is openworldly, hypnotic and truly transcendent, and can be counted among the greatest recordings of the last century by any definition. And the story does not stop there. And the plot thickens with Daddy Peepings! Shepherd's Bush shop issuing Prince Jazzbo's Studio One album *Pepper Rock*, with the CD version to "Door Peep" entitled "Impassal". Just to complicate matters, this is a different mix to the tape that appeared about 10 years ago on the now unavailable Choice Of Version set. Just be grateful.

### KING TUBBY THE ROOTS OF DUB & DUB FROM THE ROOTS MCA/UKA 15144 CD/CD2/CD3/CD4

### KING TUBBY'S BALMIGIE JAM ROCK DOME GRO CD

The German label Moll-Selkelt has slowly been building its reputation with a release schedule of good to excellent 1970s roots reggae, but here the ante is severely upped with the unleashing of two stone cold killers from dubmeister King Tubby. These two sets, both from unimpeachable sources, collapsed the walls that bound reggae within its then critically perceived narrow creative confines. Although Tubbs had earlier shaken J's musical foundations with U Roy MCing his Home Town Hi Fi sound system, and signalled his core mentors in tandem with Scratch on the awesome Blackboard Jungle, the roots albums were the ones that broke through the sales barrier, dub being his critical top and the standards by which to measure the new genre.

Marking the first and best period of collaboration with producer Bunny Lee, the rhythms flowed to Oranville Road for a fresh Tubby mix were the same rhythms that are still being versioned today and played out in dances across the globe. John Holt's "I Love Can Lee" and "Man Next Door", Cornell Campbell's "Queen

Of The Mezzel" and Johnny Clarke's "Rock With Me" all line up for the treatment, with Tubby jazzing live on the desk, dropping the spring reverb unit, echoing test tones, dropping channels in and out of the mix. Witness the acid into "Invasion" and the totally slack joy of "East Of Nowhere H-F". This comes top of the pile along with Meets Rockers Uptown, the aforementioned Blackboard Jungle and his work with Bunny Lee and Henry Madala.

Not exactly languishing at the bottom of the heap but certainly one to check out first is *Balmigie Rock*, the so-called test tracks discovered living around in Ray Cooney's loft in Garsdon, Liverpool. Having been aware to Roy's old tape a couple of times, this is entirely believable, but in being cleaned up by Geoff The Last Donnes of Probe Plus Records, home to Half Man Half Biscuit, the tracks have undergone some unusual and, frankly, annoying mutations. It's claimed that the some of the tapes date from 1966. That may be the case of the tape manufacturers, but its contents are clearly from much later. All the tunes are apparently written by Roy, but the operator is a take on Derrick Hemmets "The Loser" with wildly psychedelic OJ Roy imposed within. Certainly Roy had dealings with Tubby and even recorded his brother, Lloyd Riddick, as a live roots tune "Genuine Way", with a creaking dub on the tip. If these are Tubby's mixes, which sounds likely, it would have been preferable if the time spent on "cleaning up" the tapes went instead on assigning due provenance. Check it out.

### LITTLE TEMPO MUSICAL BRAIN FOOD SPEEDSTAR INTERNATIONAL, VICUA 1999 CD

Only in Japan... I'm afraid to say Tokyo, just in case it makes me ill! I haven't been taking music seriously enough for the past 40 years. Little Tempo were recent guests at Lee Scratch Perry's Midtown Festival, where they played in a free entry showcase, widely introduced to the bash by Asian Dub Foundation. I would certainly say to see this group, and distance travel too. The title *Musical Brain Food* is as idiosyncratic, for this album is as rock and free with its sonic connections that at times the effect is sweetly dizzying. "Gaggen Goes To Jamaica" is as funky as Kingston ever got. "Future Observer", despite the title, is closer to Tubby too. Put simply, this is Martin Denny meets Sound Dimension in a hi-tech Wonderland, an altogether uplifting downbeat experience with steel pans, up steel, flutes and kettle and bass drums bathing the whole thing in tangible warmth and colour. Engineered by Uchida in Japan and mastered by Metcalfe in London, this has all the right outstakeful backroom credentials. But this is not so much a dub version as it is a dub version of a dub version on the way with their next release later in the year, *Fireblender*. A remarkable debut.

### MAN DATA SOUND DUBIENT HYTCH HIRE LP7588 CD

Following Ato-Rhythm on "The Harmonics Of Drumming" and Laapi ("Mad"), Dubient is the

third release of the Athens based - that's Athens, Greece, not Georgia - sound production unit of Panos Tsiko Katsakos on drums and Elias Baniaras on bass, who have taken their current name from out 60s Greek group Ali Mandatis. At its nearest map reference places it next to Bill Lawler's Western Lovers, this album has the unmistakable stamp of Greece throughout, even without the use of massed baglamas. At times drawing on Afro-funk and the richness of traditional folk music, an unconscious and effortless fusion is at work here. Well, these musicians have been working together on projects since the early 1980s, and that effortless is best evidenced on the final track, the beautiful and beautiful "Nicon-D", drawn out by bowed guitar. The music is recorded at a home studio in the Parnass area of Athens, its downtown equivalent of Greenwich Village or London's Soho in the 1960s. More than just a worthy addition to the growing catalogue of global dub mutations, this excellent album deserves to be taken on its own merits.

### QUANTE JUBILA QUANTE MUSICA RAY DORCIP CD

Japan's fascination with dubwise experiments finds an etcher funk fiber in the shape of Quante Jubila. Taking their name from a Prince Far I tune cut for On-U Sound, Quante Jubila are the outcome of a collaboration between Play label A&R director Young Jeff Sakai Hammond and Tokyo's Matsunaga, who joined forces in 1998 after meeting in a Tokyo club. Not surprising then that this marriage of digital and analogue occurs in Tokyo, where their theory exploration does not negate a genuine appreciation of the dynamics that underpinned and propelled dub. J Soul Kane, whose Depth Charge is their nearest equivalent, is set to rene "Pax Americana", played a scorching but sparse mix of vocals backed with brittle percussion. As Ory & Heavy guitarist Keidai Wakioka breaks out the wah-wah and roasts the old chestnut "Resurrection Shuffle". Their steady build-up of layers is worthy of Prog rock at its polychromatic best.

### URBAN DUB FEATURING FAIRSHARE UNITY SOUND URBAN DUB FEATURING FAIRSHARE UNITY SOUND DUBHEAD DUBHEAD CD/LP

Urban Dub and Fairshare Unity Sound built up strong individual live reputations on the European nu roots and dub circuit, before finally playing together at the Concorde 2 in Brighton last year, precipitating this collaboration. Compared to Urban Dub's earlier workmanlike effort, this release turns out to be a sparkling set of energetic nu roots with initial cues including a bonus CD of remixes, raffles and sound system exclusives that are likely to prove more popular than the main album. The presence of Terry Edwards on trumpet and other brass proves an inspiration (in reggae there's really no substitute for the real thing), he's so much of a presence that the bonus includes a track "Smarty Especially Recorded Especially For Terry", a

version of the original "Smart Monkey" top tune from their debut. In addition to maintains Wasp and Hieronymus, they bring in a bunch of guest vocalists, among them Winston Fagan, who weighs in with an instant classic in the shape of the quasi-drum "Yass tune" "Yagob", and uncredited samples add to the fun on "Key To The Future". This album deserves to break beyond the usual dedicated nu roots crew.

### VARIOUS JUMBIE: GREENSLEEVES RHYTHM ALBUM #43 GREENSLEEVES GREENSLEEVES CD

### VARIOUS HINDU STORM: BROADCAST RIDER VOL. 9 JIFF STAR CR0101 CD

If there's a dance that goes with the ghastly "Jumbie" add-on, there watch out, for it might be by a "moko jumbie", a 15 foot tall dancer that usually comes with a dwarf attendant. Jumbie is the progeny of Maximum Sounds producer Fendie, a Freeman operating in Kingston alongside Ska, the producer of *Dead 21*, and Paul "Wingnut" Cressdale. Together they create a swinging Latin dancehall rhythm that attracts an A-list of singers and DJs to voice the tracks - all the usual suspects, in fact. Although it's much more preferable to go out and select a couple of 7" prelozables with the prime ones of the said rhythm, not all of us have OJ Wonder or Daddy Kool at the bottom of the street. "Meco Storm" is by far the strongest rhythm in the *Hindu Storm* series; with its clear nod to the all-conquering Diwali, it's a swirl of tablas and Bollywood sampling shuffling forward like a great gaudy pachyderm. Top tunes here is Mr Vegas's "Chop Out De Groos", which moves with its own self-destructing dance moves. Be sure by the time you read this there's another 20 titles to be trampled through cartoons and presently rampant on the streets of London, New York and Miami.

### VARIOUS RANKING MISS P PRESENTS SWEET HARMONY TROJAN TROJAN CD

Miss P started out in the early 80s with a DJ set on her brother Leple's London pirate radio station DBC (Dead Broadcast Corporation) and has been involved promoting reggae one way or another ever since. Although Iyanna's domination of reggae/rage reggae rocks remains a constant irritant to reggae fans, it would be churlish to ignore the appeal of the sweet fare offered up on this compilation. Assembling 43 tracks from it is and around the label's values, the definition sometimes becomes strained with vocal group rather than vocal group performances - and how many more times will Peter Toke & The Hailers' "Brand New Second Hand" show up? But any album with Carlton & His Shoes' "Better Days" is a good start, and it's difficult to say any missing major names from ska through rootsy and into reggae and lovers rock. The Heptones, Abyssinians, Mighty Diamonds, Techniques, Gayleads, Culture, Meditations and Royals are all there. □

# Electronica

Reviewed by Chris Sharp

## APPARAT DUPLIX

STRINGS/STRIKE/41 CD

Delicate, tentative and ever so slightly otherworldly, Duplex is a record of shadowy detail and considerable refinement. It's the work of Rumschmied's reemerging Saatchi Ring, following up previous recordings for Jetlag and Spitch Control for the Berlin-based label that he co-runs, the opening track "Gardener Bastard" is as deceptive as it is appallingly rhythmic. It's a staccato shudder under Techno's rhythms that, although heightened by Reichen shivers, doesn't suggest the mournful richness of the rest of the record. The appropriately titled second track, "Contradiction," sets the tone more effectively, with sparse guitar and the surprising arrival of a jaunty vocal that opens up a connection to the evocative sonic worlds of Talk Talk or Sigur Rós. Thereafter, Duplex oscillates between both ends of the spectrum and in the process slowly marks out unusual and rewarding territory.

## BOBBY BIRDMAN HEART CAVES

STONES RIGHTS/SHIRAZ CD

I can't tell you much about Bobby Birdman — except, of course, that it's not his real name. Heart Caves is as a track EP which seems queerly anomic synth pop balladry in a manner curiously reminiscent of Throbbing Gristle's stabs at the genre on 20 Jazz Funk Greats. Rob Kewswater, the man behind the moniker, is gifted (if that's the right word) with the kind of dazed, numb vocals that David Bowie affords during his time in Berlin, and while these 10-16, giddy ditties lack the dense melancholy presence of Low — or, indeed, the subversive aim of TG — Heart Caves suggests that Kewswater could be a cult songwriter in the making.

## BROKER/DEALER INITIAL PUBLIC OFFERING

ARTS/MCD/SP0014 CD

The last time I encountered the San Francisco based Country rock outfit The Court And Spark — and admittedly it doesn't happen very often — they were manfully holding their own in front of a crowd of morose-swinging locals outside the highway turnoff point in Austin, Texas that the closing track on Initial Public Offering should be a reminder of their rather lively song "To Hear The Firm" is a testament to the inclusive imagination of Broker/Dealer — one of the few production teams whose music genuinely bridges the stylistic gap between the discrete electronic tendencies of the USA and Europe. The duo — Ryan Fitzgerald and Ryan Bishop — have Reasons for labels like Cogan's Train. Subalterns under their belt, and this, their debut album, confirms a talent for arispy effluent four to the floor rhythmic network reminiscent of Thomas Brinkmann. They neatly temper these rigorous beats with an appealing analogue wooziness, though — with soft textures drifting through stentorian tracks like "Free Free" with sweet and subtle assurance.

## CHRIS CLARK EMPTY THE BONES OF YOU

WARP/WARP/CD107 CD

Sometimes, it just takes a moment to spark everything off. Three minutes of "Indigo Optimus" — the opening track on this, Chris Clark's second album for Warp — have passed, smoothly but innocently displaying the kind of dreamy, spacious precision that made the Atlanta Intelligence series of the early 90s so beguiling, when the cello, lazy breaks are suddenly overwhelmed by an utterly simple howl of high frequency feedback. When it subsides, the music has taken on a force focus and an almost swaying confidence — and you're hooked. Empty The Bones Of You is littered with just such serendipitous moments, with compositions that pause to gather their resources before surging forward — and the swelling chimes of "Holiday As Brutality," the bludgeoning low end of "Tyoon," the sardonic, twisted side symbols of "Unlabeled Hot" — and, given that Clark has a talent for swift sweet melody to ally to his feel for structure, it's a highly engaging experience.

## DUB TAYLOR EXPERIENCE

FOURMUSIC/SHIRAZ CD

The man behind Dub Taylor is Alex Kriger from Berlin. And like most Berlin producers, he has an array of pseudonyms to distinguish his various projects — House Transcenders might have picked up his work as Konwille, while electropop aficionados could do worse than take a look at the group called Echobab who also plays with Dub Taylor is supposed to be the alias that he affixes to his Tech House outings, but if Experience is anything to go by, it seems mostly to act as an effective warning of nifty gaudy vocalists being allowed to roam free over perfectly innocuous and texturally tasteful four to the floor rhythms. The opening "Before You Go" is proceeding briskly and effectively even in the decision marked 'noisy deceiver' fodder, when it's needed by a scrupulously warble of tinkling awfulness. "Now is the winter of my discontent," a singer proclaims, and you'll know exactly how he feels. Next.

## KPTMICHIGAN PLAYER PLAYER

ARTS/MCD/SP0014 CD

I first encountered KPTMichigan — aka Michael Beckett — on a split 12" he shared with Schneider IM, with whom he also performs live. And while that outing was intriguing enough, it didn't really hit at the defecation of placement and breadth of tone on offer on his last release for Portland, Oregon's Aesthetes label. Beckett was a guitarist before he fired up his laptop, and Player Player is pervaded not only by the valse crackle of sampled guitar distortion, but also by an unmistakable punk rock attitude — unlike a lot of electronics, the music never lapses into mere tastefulness. There's a constant sense of rhythmic drive, plenty of disarray, wayward texture — and, after 12 tracks of awkward bits and turns, the album delivers one last outcrop punch in the form of a sweetly packed and gently fuzzy ballad called "Hey Brother."

## LEAFCUTTER JOHN THE HOUSEBOUND SPIRIT

PLANET MU/CD001 CD

Within the first 40 seconds of The Housebound Spirit, Leafcutter John Burton manages to assemble the kind of complex, suggestive soundscape that most producers working in the field struggle to deliver once during an entire album. It feels effortless — a scattering of relentless electroacoustic battles, an evanescent guitar fragment, some treated temple bells and a sudden splash of violin — but these few sparse fragments of sound hang together with the invisible conviction of a fine hawk. And although a love of pure sound doubtless inspired by the academic adventures of Bernard Parmegiani and Pierre Henry lies at the heart of everything here, John has forged for beyond that abstract world to gather the elements that he alone needs to synthesize. "Electric Love" mimes the leafless abandon of The Harter Inn's Puck with sagging vocalic wails straight out of Tin Pan Alley. "Walk On My Back" sounds like Gelsa Furtyngh sitting in on the sessions for Another Green World, while "Rescan" gales accurately returns to the electric folk of Bluewater's real music. There's even, in "House Of A Soul," a mournful ballad worthy of Bill Oddie — but somehow, despite its sanity, The Housebound Spirit retains an impressive coherence throughout.

## MOKIRA SUSEIMINE

IDEAL/IDEAL/CD13 CD

With a title that alludes to isn't Anything-on My Bloody Valentine and songs named after bleeding chunks of Smiths lyrics, you would expect the music on this four track EP to lean heavily on 80s British indie music. But who says these shadowy practitioners of Scandinavian electronica don't have a sense of humor? Suseimine turns out to be a sedate, cerebral and subtle dance collection, and proves (as The Walkman Stands To Me! and "Bigger Than Other Girls Mothers" offer) a satisfying Polka-like crawl through giddy, mostly Ambient spaces. Mokira is Andreas Tjander, whose 2001 album Luv, for Mike Plateau, turned out to be the high-water mark for the clicks + cuts sound — Suseimine gives a hint of the way that his music is moving. It closes with some scarily tactile electric guitar doodles. To be continued...

## NUDGE ELABORATE DEVICES FILTERING CRISIS

TIGERLEAF/MEADOWS CD

Nudge integrate live performance and electronic processes in a seamlessly assessed and wildly wacky fashion — they're a rare peace American collective for whom marathon jam sessions are as central a part of the creative process as hours handed over a sequencer, and there are enough wiles floating around here to take them in several directions at once. Compare, for example, the stealthily mournful "Blue Screen" — a digital torch song adorned by a tantalizingly introspective Honey Owens vocal — with "Love-in

Academy," which evolves from a Gen-Hike exercise in rhythmic discipline into an exuberant festival of moosek distortion which brings the mutant, overlaid spirit of "Free Your Mind And Your Ass Will Follow" into the digital era. To be honest, not everything on Elaborate Devices is as successful, but with an array of sound sources that includes flute, guitar, trumpet, trombone and vibraphone, there's rarely a genuinely dull moment.

## BOGDAN RACZYNSKI RENEGADE PLATINUM MEGA DANCE ATTACK PARTY: DON THE PLATES

REFLEX/CD131 CD

More twichy peculiar music from the mind of Reflex's marquis Bogdan Raczynski, the first four tracks here have been recently circulating on a vinyl EP called "I Will Eat Your Children Too" and for this CD version they're joined by the sparser and, frankly, even more mental tracks from the archives, mischievously described as "90 drum 'n' bass classmate." Regardless of the vintage, Raczynski's music is characterized by a wily witlessness. His ability to take sudden risks with a track is breathtaking and infusing in equal measure — for every inspired Beethoven piano appoggio or wily cello angle there's a manically repetitive off-key keyboard or an atonal squall of tonal noise. The newer pieces are enlivened by stretches of detached singing, bursts of pirate radio noise and an artfully wildened 303. They're engaging enough — but the suspicion is that this stuff was more fun to make than it is to listen to.

## TELEFAX DES COURSES DES CHOSES INVISIBLES

CDMA/CD/CD0011 CD

Téléfax, as you might guess from the name, is all about long distance communication. In fact, this lesser and geographically widespread French collective — its members are scattered across the country, from Toulouse to Paris and further afield — have managed to turn mail art into a surprisingly effective compositional process, sending fragments of music between themselves and so infusing the solitary procession from sampler to sequencer to hard drive with a genuinely collaborative and convincingly organic quality. Listening, you'll get across at influences ranging from the first British wave of post-rock (Black Psychosis, Disco Inferno) to Godspeed You! Black Emperor, but there's enough confidence and imagination displayed in this debut album to suggest that Téléfax have their own distinctly Gallic agenda. A track like "Rise" combines the rumoured waveliness of The Soggy Bunch, bursts of hedonism, electric noise and sweetly evolving backing vocals in its brief two and a half minute span. Elsewhere, they stretch out with syncretic purpose, but the fact that this music has been compiled and assembled rather than jammed means that self-indulgence is always a repossessing arm's length away. □



# Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

## BERTRAND DENZLER & HANS KOCH ASYMMETRIES AMIRAGES MAGNETROUTES AM1 19 CD

Hans Koch is the better known of these two Swiss road players through his longstanding tie with composer Fredy Studer and cellist Martin Schütz, and other projects, including *Dixie*, *Cybermarché* (RMP) recorded with Evan Parker and Louis Sclavis. On that CD, Koch plays bass clarinet and soprano sax, as he does here with Denzler on tenor. *Asymmetries* features four duets that probe the reader's margins in a conflicting, often whispered exchange of secrets of embouchure, breath and attack. Long wheezing exhalations, rapid juddering, bell-like trills and chirrup, gossamer puffs, purring and rasps have displaced the sounds of the centre ground. Dialogue occurs nonetheless as statements interlock and overlap, cryptic yet clearly and tightly shaped.

## FRÖDE GJERSTAD & LASSE MARHAUG TAU RMR 1060000 CD

A flurry of recent releases have featured alto saxophonist Frode Gjerstad. Here he's embroiled with fellow Norwegian Lasse Marhaug, half of electronics duo Jackhammer. Gjerstad's style has been the low bass and drums, but he has shown on numerous occasions that he enjoys a challenge, and this encounter with electronics gives him plenty to ponder, not least because Marhaug opts initially for a relatively subdued and stealthy approach. Gjerstad tries out clarinet as well as sax in his quest for tenors in common, but doesn't really hit his stride until the latter half, when the electronic rumble and hiss builds up into gritty turbulence. In the final phase Gjerstad is confronted with a tangle of virtual versions of himself. He never sounds entirely at home on *Tau*, but setting it was presumably not the goal of the encounter.

## SHOJI HANO 48 IMPROVISED MUSIC FROM JAPAN IMJ05 CD

"I'm a drummer, not a percussionist," asserts Shoji Hano, and the two extended solos on 48 make the terms of his distinction clear. Hano at the kit permeates the pulse and juggles metrics, retelling out a constantly moving stream of mutating muscular polyrhythms. He's obviously alert to qualities of drum and cymbal sound, but whereas percussionists often seek out colour and texture beyond the hits resources in order to generate atmospheres and associations, Hano's playing is potently self-contained, like physical and spiritual exercise that demands full absorption in activity. The nobility of his drumming moment to moment drives the attention there; there's none of the tedious rewording that can afflict long drum solos, swirling towards some extraneous goal. Hano's resources have included Derek Bailey, Peter Brötzmann and Kaji Hano, and he has played with Hugh Hopper and Gary Smith in the excellent *Glass Case*. 48 sees a concentrated Hano addressing the question "how to confront the instrument called drum".

## THE HAT SHOES HOME REC REC MUSIC REC002 78 CD

Singer Catherine Jaumain and percussionist Bill Glines remain under The Hat Shoes umbrella that formerly also provided shelter to collect Jim Cora and drummer Charles Hayward. Glines uses percussion instruments designed and built by Megan Spiller that at times superficially recall the inerted soundworld of Harry Partch. Glines is also credited with notes, thorny and piano and a couple of his instruments are interspersed among this set of quirky songs, an appealing mix of coherent choruses, art ballads, mutated folk airs and nursery chants. At times Jaumain's light, unalloyed voice is heard alone, elsewhere she carries the melody or speaks text while Glines lay out patterned atmospheres and decorated backdrops.

## LUCIANO MARGORANI DOPOTUTTO SOLCO 001 CD SOLO CONCERT SOLCO 001 CD

An earlier Ro2o release featured Italian guitarist Margorani's nylon string DJSPH recording, termed by Dogear, operating as DJSPH. These two CDs, issued in runs of 100, present further glimpses of Margorani's fine and unassuming work. The concert recording opens with an acoustic trawl of idiomatic motifs, touching on folk, flamenco, classical and rock vocabularies. A varied series of electric improvisations follow, venturing often onto the territory mapped out by Fred Frith, yet still distinctively Margorani's own in execution. Set among them is an essentially faithful reading of Phil Manzanera's "Laguna". *Dopotutto* is a home recording of informal jottings, mingling very quiet and mostly unorthodox soundings of acoustic guitar with snippets of radio and television broadcasts and unpredictable ambient noise. It has a casual, almost accidental feel, modest and everyday yet exercising negligible charm.

## RETURN OF THE NEW THING TRAQUE AVALON AV101 CD

The half-hour long tape track, recorded in 2002, finds the Paris-based quartet thrashing and falling through free jazz scrub. Saxophonist Jean-Luc Garnier plays scurrying alto with a jagged tone and sounds dangerous. More than Dan Warburton's piano is here, there and everywhere, barbed and unbending. Bassist François Fuchs is both agile and bulky; hyperactive drummer Edward Pernod feels the forty-four recordings from the 2000 Mufzone Jazz Festival follow, less consistently ill-timed, more varied in pace and mood but still bawling with attitude. Why return to a few touches of violin, Garnier adds some separate and intermittently hits at a taste for Evan Parker's playing. Each musician brings his own foolishness and Return Of The New Thing are by no means merely imitative of powerhouse models. At its best the quartet draw back from the cathartic avalanche and make space for finer detail.

## PAUL SMOKER DUOCITY IN BRASS & WOOD CAZENOVE CRI1105/16 2xCD

Recorded five months apart in 2001, these two sets present trumpeter Paul Smoker in duets with different basses. In May it was Ed (son of Gunter) Schuler, in October Denzil Buxell. In both cases there was no rehearsal or prior discussion. *Duocity* is an excellent showcase for Smoker, whose dazzling technical prowess is matched by an attitude of feeling for jazz improvising. Both qualities are satisfied in understanding of the tradition without being bound by it. His tone is resilient yet highly flexible, prone to murmur low growls or stretch into the high-note atmosphere. In between those extremes he can be formal and reserved or playful and experimental, tender, aggressive, rapacious or dourful, and he thrives on the elasticity of this particular instrumental coupling. Schuler is fully bodied and burished, with an ingrained propensity to swing. Buxell is a cooler virtuoso, given to cavernous contraltos and bold dramatic gestures. The two sets proceed along quite dissimilar lines and in both cases Smoker gets what he deserves.

## STERN/GUERRA STITCH IMPERMANENT RECORDINGS 004 CD

Jim Stern and Anthony Guerra are Australians based in London, where *Stitch* was recorded and edited between December 2001 and June 2002. Stern works with electronics and field recordings. Guerra with electric guitar. Guerra's luminous drones loop through much of the music, refracted at times into recurrent sub-Frippertones. Stern walks clouds of interference into the radiant atmosphere, agitated parables of nose and fonic sound that either hang around like dust or cling together in a continuum that inverts the guitar's sensory. This Generation is probably too clear-cut. Guerra doubtless contributes his share of pollutants. Stern doubtless enhances the immorality. Out of their collaboration, hiss, hum and glitch, plus fragments that almost divulge a fuller identity, form packets of disturbance playing against a glow. The result is more interesting and strongly livelier than either of these elements would be on their own.

## TRIO-X JOURNEY CMP 280 CD

Ten "episodes" ranging from three to 12 minutes in length, from rousing to contemplative in mood. From Joe McPhee plays alto and tenor saxophone, with Dominic Duval on bass and drummer Jay Rosen. Trio-X is a beautifully balanced unit, shown to advantage in the vainglorious programme of *Journey*. Whatever the character of the music, McPhee makes difficult and improbable mixes the rational choice. His power and that awesome combination of funny and doing are reflected back by Duval's mass and capacity for obfuscation. Rosen keeps clear-sighted and decisive as he steers between them, seizing odd moments to disclose his own laterally inclined expressiveness. The impressive musicianship never makes for difficult listening.

*Journey* gets fiery, funky, and tranquil — the closing rendition of "Amazing Grace" is openly elegiac. The emphasis, as ever with McPhee, is on communication and making contact.

## TSAHAR/KOWALD/MURRAY MA HOPSCORCH HOPR8 CD

The two were recorded live at the Fundacio Joan Miro, Barcelona in July 2002. Asaf Tshah, on tenor saxophone, is intense as ever, a sustained eruption of high-pressure wailing and intercalated reeling in Albert Ayler's long shadow. Reassess Peter Kowald and drummer Sunny Murray, unstinting originals in free music and newer content with simple *Tahar*, move the improvisation along unexpected trajectories and make leaps that jolt Tshah away from his habitual in-passioned line, deflecting him for a brief spell onto bass clarinet. The performance has multiple and shifting centres of interest — a lesson from the old guys that there are many other uses for fire than simply to burn.

## VERYAN WESTON TESSELLATIONS BMANEM 4466 CD

Veryan Weston is an unusually cliché-free pianist, inventively finding a fresh angle and sounding like nobody else. *Tessellations* is a landmark in his recorded work, a brilliantly realised hour-long compositional structure for improviser that derives additional interest from being performed on the Lithual Piano, a grand enhanced by four registers through mechanical means. Ravel wrote two pieces for the instrument, then it was more or less forgotten and only one historical example still exists. *Tessellations* uses 52 linked pentatonic scales with built-in scope for exploration and invention. Weston uses the harpsichord soundings of the Lithual with tact to match the fine judgment shown throughout this evolving mosaic. A seamless yet strikingly varied cycle unfolds, comparable in scope and accomplishment to, say, Perry Riley's extended piano compositions, comparably pieceisable and despoiling the same kind of respect.

## MANON LIU WINTER & FRANZ HAUZINGER BROSRA GROB 844/LC1099 CD

Hauzinger's quartet-toned trumpet and Winter's extended piano fuse in remarkable ways on *Brosra*. The trumpet sounds deconstructed further than ever, a taut of breath, moaning, sighing, infrequently gusting through the piano's frame. Winter creates a skeletal sense of the instrument, tail strings popping and creaking, keys rattling, now and again a metallic clack or a transitory polyphonic shimmer. The pair have left behind conventional trumpet and piano releases and have melted into an integrated, codified overheard sound source unique to this occasion. Six tracks create a uniformly ghostly atmosphere — snapping ingesting, cackling ice flocs, spectral moonshine... Without recourse to imagery, *Brosra* remains captivating otherworldly stuff. □

# Modern Composition

Reviewed by Philip Clark

## DAVID ARNER SOLO PIANO

DECCA 0099 CD

"This is an album of spontaneous compositions, each piece organized through the focus of my attention in the process of creation," writes pianist David Arner in his commentary to this 35-minute set of solo piano music. Arner's language is closer to Cecil Taylor, or perhaps to Denz, Pullen, than to the Romanticism of Keith Jarrett, and Legacy is a raucous deconstruction of 'The Battle Hymn Of The Republic', that traces its journey from "song of spiritual devotion" to "song of gaily merriment." The disarray of Arner's improvisation of a music box, by, is quite without being cutey and only the harmonically static blues piece *Blow!* outlays its welcome.

## JOHN BULLER THE THEATRE OF MEMORY

NMC 0091 CD

UK composer John Buller emerged in the mid-60s from a similar aesthetic background to Peter Maxwell Davies and shared Maxwell's fascination for the music of Greek theatre. In his 1991 orchestral work *The Theatre Of Memory*, Buller splits the orchestra up into instrumental groups in an attempt to provoke a clash between imagined dramatic personas. The drama is led by a 'chorus' of seven instruments (including lugubrious contra-bass clarinet and tinkling celesta), but it's surprising how straightforward and harmonically indistinct Buller's score now seems, compared to Bartók's similarly conceived *Secret Theatre* (1984). More inspiring is *Prospere*, his setting of 12th century troubadour texts for voice, electric guitar and orchestra. This piece has a tremendously atmospheric underbelly, with Timothy Walker's earthy electric guitar shadowing, then replacing, the mezzo soprano voice. The BBC Symphony Orchestra conducted by Mark Devlin are well aided.

## JOHN CAIGE/JOHN DOWLAND JOVI VOC!

MLM/FESTO CD1110 CD

John Caige's earlier works for prepared piano always had a timeless quality about them, as though the basics of their material could have appeared at any point during the past 500 years. His Italian guitarist Maurizio Grandinetti makes that connection explicit by rerecording transcriptions of early Caige masterpieces like *Musica For Marcel Duchamp*, *In A Landscape* and *A Room* with music by Elizabethan composer John Dowland. Grandinetti does a cogent job of transferring the essentials of Caige's piano writing to the guitar. There's no mention of how he "prepared" his guitar, but the stylised percussive manner of his playing feels entirely authentic and convincing. Good also to hear the selection of Dowland's melodically bewitching pavan.

## ENSEMBLE CONTEMPORAIN DE MONTREAL NOUVEAUX TERRITOIRES

ATMA ACC022001 CD

A 2000 multimedia festival held in Montreal gave birth to these intriguing pieces by Canadian

composers André Rieix, Yawak Piamond and Sean Ferguson. Ferguson's *Apocryphal Graffiti* plays with the notion that "to make graffiti is to create one's art on the art of someone else". The finale from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony is splashed over with a coat of shocking colour, and a clientelist mimes through Messiaen's *Quartet For The End Of Time* and the curtain-raising glissando from *Rhapsody In Blue*. Rieix's *Catégorie De Bombes Cordonales* is also concerned with the positioning of musical objects, and outrageous genre styles and orchestral timbres "in the manner of a large department store". A melodramatic operatic soprano does a supermarket sweep through the aisles, offering comment on the consumerist abuse of music. Piamond's *Post* was originally written as a backdrop to a silent movie. It's a busily packed score, but the absent images are keenly felt.

## VINNY GOLIA FEEDING FRENCY

NMC 0092 NMC0092 CD

Rice-ton Viny Golia runs his Nine Winds label out of Beverly Hills, a locale with the reputation of being something of a cultural desert. Feeding Frency is subtitled "Music For Woodwinds & String Quartet", and features Golia's often manic handwriting of the extended range of flute and clarinet instruments against string quartet writing perched somewhere between late Bartók and early Ligeti. Golia replaces the traditional voice choir in the string quartet with Karl Filiano's double bass, a move ensuring that his improviser's instincts have plenty to feed on. This is tactile music that pounces with great physicality. Golia's high woodwind howling often wails itself to the piercing strings like the tension of clashing lines in a Bridget Riley painting. At other times generalised string drizzle does real instrumental clarity, and although greater clarity would help sharpen up the musical architecture, Golia presents an exhilarating 77 minutes of semi-improvised music.

## DANIEL GOODE EIGHT THRUSHES IN NEW YORK

PROOF PEAK MUSIC PIANO CD

A very special disc. Quietist Daniel Goode rolls into town with the modules of his piece *Eight Thrushes* primed and ready to go. He then hooks up with some local folk musicians, and together they negotiate a site-specific interpretation of the piece incorporating Goode's ideas with the local folk music. Goode's material is based on recordings of the hermit thrush songbird, a native of North America, which he has transformed into regenerative loops of good-natured melodic material. His performance was recorded in New York in 1998 with Shayan Boshikian on accordion bagpipes, Guy Klaczewski on bluegrass and the seven-piece Downtown Ensemble. It starts from near silence, but Goode's thrushlike chirp goes increasingly insistent and become framed by the coincidental counterpoint flowing from the folkly material played by the other instruments. The result is

completely fascinating and engrossing, and the disc also contains examples of Goode's rather idiosyncratic clarinet improvisations.

## CHRISTOPH HAAS SACRED SPACE SACRED SOUND

ANIMATO ABBECCIO CD

An attractive if a bit faded offering from German composer Christoph Haas, based on Pythagoras's theories of the relationships between proportion, algebra, geometry and music. "Music is to time as architecture is to space," Haas observes, and his disc begins with the simplest of melodies based on the overtone series, heard on a set of air tubes. He then takes the proportions of the overtone series to a cart essay for lute and harp, and the disc moves on to explore compositions based on Christian symbolism and early church choirs. Hildegarde von Bingen's antiphon *O Chorusans Lux Stetitum* is heard in a sensitive arrangement for voice and tubular bells.

## LEO KUPPER COMPLETE ELECTRONIC WORKS 1961-74

SUB ROSA R164 CD

Leo Kupper worked as assistant to his fellow Belgian composer Henri Pousseur and later devised the GAMM machine (*Générateur Automatique de Musique Électronique*), a gizmo allowing composers to interact with "sonic cells sensitive to modulations of positive and negative voltages". No, I'm not the wiser either, but Kupper creates pieces of great timbral subtlety and lush emotional depth from this severe sounding technology. The manipulation of vocal sounds in the opening section of *Innoence* (1966-68) owes something to Ben's Visages, and the piece develops into a desolate electronic landscape that comes tinged with an unexpected hint of perfume, the earlier *Electro-potere* for "20 young voices" uses phonic sounds to pursue a journey from abstract vocal sounds to the single intimate vocal "name", meaning blade. In the thematic footprints of Stockhausen's *Gesang Der Jünglinge* (*Song Of Youths*), *Electro-potere* is a piece about "the psychological realms as experienced by young girls and boys".

## NEW NOISE INSONMIAC

NNL NNL1 CD

New Noise are the London based duo of obstinate Janey Miller and percussionist Jody Burgess. Searing up music written for solo oboe, or for a duo of oboe and percussion, is never going to be easy, and some pieces here are shockingly so. Jeffrey Agee's *Blues For Old Waves* was a quotation from Paul Desmond's *Blue Five* with a sequence of three jazz quotations, and *Not Waking Up* by Del Del Esola fuses traditional and urban into a hollow trill. Simon Holt's moodiness of a mythical Celtic bane, *Banshee*, has more nerve, but Pulse Sampler by Holt's teacher Harrison Birtwistle — the only certified masterpiece for this combination — is a lazily messy. Other pieces by John Zorn, Theo Maguire and Nigel

Osbourne suggest two excellent players struggling to find a convincing persona.

## LAMBERT ORKIS FROM HAMMERS TO BYTES

TRIANGLE 0301 CD

Lambert Orkis is a distinguished American classical pianist who has played with cellist Mstislav Rostropovich and regularly partners violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter. The pieces on this disc show how far New Music has evolved away from what he assumes it to be. Richard Wernick's *Piano Sonata No 2* (2000) is a sledge-pedal general effort that has grandeur of scale but a lack of distinctive ideas to fill it in. James Pritoch's *Sonata-Fantasia* (2001) is written for an instrumental hybrid of piano and synthesizer, and is certainly a more engaging listen. Its set of neo-Romantic waltzes is spaced by the synthesizer's extended range, before dimming with "Daddy's New Groove", where the synth does a jazz Postmodern. If it lacks the critical edge Frederic Rzewski brings to similar projects, on its own terms it's an amiable enough jaunt.

## GERHARD STÄBLER THE COMPLETE PIANO MUSIC

METIER MASC0002001A/B/C/D/E/F/G/H/I/J/K/L/M/N/O/P/Q/R/S/T/U/V/W/X/Y/Z

German composer Gerhard Stäbler (born 1949) has long treated the concert hall as a laboratory rather than an institution. He's recently been working with Fluxus survivor Nam June Paik, and has produced 'another' scores and pieces made from amalgams of text and musical notation. Stäbler's piano music also comes from an unmistakably experimental mindset, and his cycle of piano works entitled *Interieur* require the pianist to converse with radios and auxiliary percussive instruments. However, more striking is Stäbler's extraordinary evocation of his favourite artist, Dalí (1995-96). Here common enough tonal chords meet against the tone clusters, and tricks of tonal accumulation throughout its half-hour duration to be ignited at the end. Stäbler's structure is sumptuously bely and awkward, and Dalí is a massive achievement. Pianist Paolo Areschi plays the music with authority and nerve.

## MICHAEL TIPPETT THE KNOT GARDEN

DECCA AT50592 CD

Michael Tippett's third opera *The Knot Garden* (1966-69) uses the Elizabethan Knot Garden as an analogy for the complex intertwining of its main character Magnus's relationships. In the late 50s the psychologist R.D. Laing developed his study of human behaviour, *Knots*, along similar lines, and Tippett's work is infused with the sexual freedoms and sounds of that period. Formally, the piece is modelled on *The Ring*, with the storm now interpreted as the psychological disturbances of Magnus. The music is brusque and violent. The drama catapults between violent action, extreme intimacy and the exploit use of jazz and blues. British musical life was agog at this apparent sedition of *Heir and Ben's* Wozzeck, and the piece has retained its provocative magic. Here, it's coupled with Tippett's Fourth Symphony. □

# Outer Limits

Reviewed by Jim Haynes

## TIM CATTIN SLOW TWITCH DR JMS DRUMS4 CD

Tim Cattin's *Slow Twitch* initially suggests misaligned machines, their rattling bolts struggling to hold everything together while the torque of the engines slowly unravels itself to its own demise. However, this Australian sound artist has realised an impressive *troupe Forêt*, charming an arsenal of prepared guitars to mimic the environmental sifter of an anachronistic compressor or a grizzled refrigeration unit or whatever obscure machine came to hand that never quite works. First, a bow and customised amateur guitar strings in constant motion, building dense layers of repetitive clinkings and gleaming magnetic disturbances. *Slow Twitch* resonates with the conceptual self-propulsion of Paul Panthuy's robotic guitar ensembles, blurring lines between metal machine music and holy minimalism.

## ERIC CORDIER DIGITALIS PURPUREA GROUND FAULT GPO23 CD

In 1989, French electroacoustic technician Eric Cordier began a series of sound installations displaying hundreds of speaker cones mounted on the wall of the exhibition space at the level of the listener's ear. For every installation commissioned, he composed a different soundtrack to broadcast over the clustered speakers. Cordier has produced more than 20 such installations, but *Digitalis Purpurea* is only his second documentation, following his 1996 album *Quoque*. Here, he applies electronic modulation and musique concrète techniques to the instrumental sources of hardy guitar, church organ and dulcimer wire. The resulting spiralling frequencies, sterile plastic drones and algorithmic tone generations stay true to traditions set forth by IAN-GRM.

## CREMASTER INFRA ANTIPOD APO0016 CD

In the wake of Matthew Barney's *Cremaster* films, with their baroque apocalypses or the divisions between the sexes, it's imperative for any other endeavour to name themselves *Cremaster* without suffering an identity crisis. Not the Spanish Portuguese Improv noise combo of Fernán Gales and Alfredo Costa Montero instantly differentiated themselves from Barney's creation, using little more than feedback, a couple of disembodying guitar pickups, and objects stolen from Keith Rowe's kit. Their pressurised noise and crackling electric scraggles materialise within a far more claustrophobic stereo field.

## DEG DEG FIREWORK EDITION PER1003 LP SONS OF GOD REFURNISH FIREWORK EDITION PER1003 CD

"For us, it was a way to ask questions about the conditions of life around the world," remarked Laila Egeen about his *Kingdoms of Egeenland-*

*Vergaland* project with OM Van Haussoff in *The Wire* 222. It's also an excellent synopsis for his work at large. Self-appraisal to positions of power and the redistribution of symbolic power are at the core of Egeen's questions. *Refurnish* by The Sons Of God - Egeen's collaborator with *Net Tinkled* - is the aural residue of a performance when the duo systematically demolished a bourgeois apartment that had been erected in a theatrical setting. An interlude of clanging *Musik* collapses under the infernal clattering of their backing material, collapsed from mechanical grunting and construction site din. In turn, the *Sons* hammer and no apart the furniture around them, capturing "one of those elusive moments where everyday life enters into a union with the heretic nature of the inner life."

Equally heroic yet far more catastrophic is Egeen's collaboration with Kevin Dumm and Mies Gustafson, simply referred to as DEG. Here, waves of textual abrasions collide with linear disjunctions that belie the instrumental line-up of sax, guitar, electronics and Laila Egeen playing himself. Each event is an undefined gesture loaded with potential meaning found in the sagging from a sex or the clatter of metallic objects. The duo purposefully leave each of these details unresolved and incomplete, privileging the instantaneous self-creation of ill-formed thoughts, above their fulfillment. A raw thinking noise periodically awakens to consume all of these dispersed sounds in a thick total roar.

## J FREDE LIVE DOCUMENTS DOCTEST MEDIA TH1003 CD

During an infernal performance at the now defunct Chemofyl Zone Gallery in Denver Colorado, the Los Angeles based J Frede looked the audience in a winnnowed out proceeded to construct a pneumatic, which threatened to detonate if he made any wrong moves. Fortunately for all in attendance, he succeeded in the task and the bomb never exploded. Nowadays, Frede's performing manner is far removed from that of the agro-terrorist, as he calmly situates himself behind the computer and clicks his way through lowercase manipulations of field recordings and electroacoustics. He may have discovered his audience past, but a threat of something ominous and unknowable lured just beneath the surface prevails within this collection of live recordings. With these three extended pieces called from 2000-01, Frede gradually introduces textual absences that quietly overwhelm his initial pelts of toral digital futterings. The subtle intrusions from electroshock pinpoints, psychoacoustic drone play and anxiously skittering gestures activate Frede's sound constructions to create disquieting anamorphoses.

## HOUSE OF LOW CULTURE EDWARD'S LAMENT HEAVENLY INTEREST CD

Imaginary film scores accord Hollywood's actions of what is realising should be, while purposefully heightening the sense of drama within the musical interludes to tap into an

audience's collective experience of moviegoing. For his latest project, *House Of Low Culture*, Matheoree coo Aaron Turner (of *Isis*, *Old Man*, *Glenn* and *Lotus Eaters*) presents his own version of the imaginary soundtrack in *Edward's Lament*. The title could be an arcane reference to Ken Russell's cut movie *Altered States*, but the sprawling construction extends greater companions to Allen Siper's haunted sound design than Barry Adamson's neo/say their postiches. The fictional protagonist to *Edward's Lament* appears to be a post-apocalyptic, comic book hero mixed in the author and redemptive catastrophe of the *Mad Max* films. Buzzing guitar drones and low impact environmental rumblings set an introspective, brooding mood, broken up with a few extended song fragments. The most memorable is "On The Upswing", where his acoustic guitar plods through a monochromatic dirge backed by growling distortion and a special voice, evoking an undeniable sense of loss. Turner may have mastered the language of glossy film scores, but *Edward's Lament* stays just short of transcending its references in order to develop a clear iconography of its own.

## STEFAN MATHIEU KAPOTTE MUZIEK BY STEFAN MATHIEU KOPH PLASTICS KPH013 CD

An intentional distortion occurring to a virtual obliteration of destroyed music. That's the gist of the tenth in the ongoing commissioned series of recordings of Kapotte Muziek, one of the many projects created by Fins de Waard Stefan Mathieu is no stranger to the art of abstracting somebody else's music, as his Fall Swing recording *Edits* evolved to *La Tingo*, Kai Clayton, Akira Rabele and others into dreamy, vaporous clouds of digitization. However, no such transparent embrace is found within his processing of Kapotte Muziek, as Mathieu's computer crushed every heard as he neared completion of this piece. After wrestling with his technology for a short time, the computer spat out this melody of his Kapotte Muziek material. The lines between the detritus-laced of faulty musique concrète and Kapotte Muziek's original sonic turntable artist, Mathieu's shattered thoughts and the computer authored collage, are thoroughly smeared to produce a noxious and thankfully short assault of jittery noise and barking squeals.

## DANIEL MENCHE INVOKER ANTIPOD APO0016 CD

As considerably evocative as the Portland, Oregon noise veteran Daniel Menche has been during the past decade or so, his metaphors and concepts occasionally suffer from the same manic energy that he puts into his music. The clumsily titled *Invoker* is another stunning array of Menche's electroacoustic techniques, which perpetually cycle from sonic mumbos to brooding exercises to turn down feedback with a single, quickly passed composition amicably living between all of these events.

When applied as audio expressionism in *Scavenging*, *Carissa* or *Field Of Skin*, which directly equated the physicality of the human body with the physicality of Menche's brain, his churning arsenal of sound worked quite well. However, when the same strategies are applied to the duration of gnomic wisdom, as is the case for *Invoker*, the bopish exuberance, which ignites so much of Menche's work with fury and passion, actually keeps him from contacting any of those ancient mysteries he claims to seek. Possibly, if Menche had titled this record something like *A Meditation On Violence*, this argument would be moot and he'd have had another great record under his belt.

## TOMAS PHILLIPS ON DIT TRENTE OSEAUX TOC003 CD

According to an accompanying essay for Tomas Phillips's debut disc, *On Dit* refers to the post-structuralist notion of a discourse subject devoid of authorial agency. While many post-structuralist composers from Adorno Wellisch to Brandon LaBelle and Cristof Mancini after similar thoughts with the grandiose tone of self-appointed genius, Phillips comes over as more genuine in his essential struggles. His studies force the reconsideration of the self as reflected in a culture of mediated objects. Fortunately, the music of *On Dit* is far more compelling when he describes it as an abstracted autobiography of the anxiety induced by Phillips's own relocation from the eastern seaboard of North Carolina to Montreal. After six months of instability, the action begins with a swarm of pierced sinewaves and microstructure gestures. The source material behind these events may have been organic in nature, but through his pensive treatment, he renders each sound as a brittle piece of digital code held taut against a backdrop of emptiness. An ominous humble gradually unveils this crystalline purity, reconfiguring everything into a lowcase riff (if that's not an oxymoron) with glistering shards of high frequencies tumbling between the pulsations of a post-lochic noise. Heffening back to Jean O'Rourke's early success with *Scand* and its immanent *Van Probe* by Illusion Of Safety, *On Dit* is a rich expression of electroacoustic dynamism.

## TAN AS FUCK HEAVIER THAN EXCITEMENT VANISHING VR003 CD R

Google searches for information about Nashville, Tennessee's zombie noise rock group Tan As Fuck result in a few blogs about their constant touring in midwest soundscapes, plus a hell of a lot of French porn sites. The random link is quite appropriate, though, as these Nashvilleans revel in an explosion of the ad through a very raw manipulation of cheap electronics, drums, bass and sax. Tan As Fuck are less interested in the eucalyptus excess of furious Prog percussion and aggressive guitar licks, rather, *Heavier Than Excitement* duels it's tormented electronic. They kick a dirty drum kit groove in an on-the-fly marriage of *This Heat* and *Sash Sides*. □



# Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Shadow of his former self: Paul Morley

## WORDS AND MUSIC: A HISTORY OF POP IN THE SHAPE OF A CITY PAUL MORLEY

BLOOMSBURY PRK \$15.99

BY BRIAN MORTON

If happy novelist Richard Brautigan — a frequent champion of the whimsical juxtaposition — had lived long enough to write a history of pop, it might have read very much like this. Who else would have sat Kylie Minogue alongside John Cage on the freeway? And had Cage tell her a knock-knock joke about Philip Glass? This is the kind of spirit that inspired Brautigan to introduce Norman Mailer as a tank commander and have Charles Lindbergh and a shopkeeper who looks like Hitler rub shoulders in Trout Fishing in America, a book that purports to be a manual on fly fishing.

Paul Morley's latest — and best — book purports to tell the story of pop not so much in the shape of a city as in a journey to an imaginary city, the same one Cage and Kylie can

see on the horizon. His reference points are the 1970 piece by Miles Luper, *I Am Sitting in a Room*, and a song of Kylie's, which also begins with an unspoken "I." "Can't Get You Out Of My Head". One of them — and you guess which — is music about music or music that celebrates the technique and technology of music. The other is an essay in the impossibility of music and the absolute, simple ubiquity of music.

Taken together, they may seem strange guides, but they are nothing to the strangeness of the lists — endless lists — and the perverse pairings of songs and artists that occupy the bulk of Morley's book. These 350-odd pages are nothing other than the inside of the head of a man totally defined by music, but convinced of the ultimate inability of words to express any of the reality of music, and also equally convinced that only by writing about it can he express at least some of its polymorphous and perverse delights. And, let's not forget, this is a man married and shaped by the experiences wrenched onto the page in his memoir *Nothing,*

which for a day or two yet might remain my

second favorite Paul Morley book.

*Words And Music* is useless to you if you don't surrender to its impressive illogic and, by doing so, open yourself to its impeccable logic. For Morley, music is more than just an auditory symptom of the spectacle. It is political, emotional, material, apologetic, dry and evanescent. It is also beyond category. The one word that does not apply to this book or to the tastes of the man who allowed it to write itself is "eclectic." There is no element of choice in his trawls from Aphex Twin to Frank Zappa, or, in a different mood and for a different magazine pull, from Laurie Anderson to The Zombies. These are the sounds that have persisted and it is the mechanical inevitability of pop as well as its skittish libertarianism that comes across most strongly.

Some sections are pure tour de force, an elaborate deconstructive defense of Metal Machine Music, which makes Lou Reed sound like an ass, but a much smarter ass than any of

the rest of us; a virtual encounter between Kylie and Jarvis Cocker which makes Jarvis sound ditsy, a slice of pure Brautigan that stacks up "as much as" analogues with the great American's humorously dumpty logic — "it means exactly what I say it means" — pushed to the limit.

Almost everyone who is or was anyone hitches a ride in Kylie's car: Kraftwerk, Einstein, Masay Elliott, Ornette Coleman, Wittgenstein and another Brautiganesque character known as Now! That's What I Call Music (who may be one character or 78, make that 83, no, 84; you get the picture). In his embrace of all this, Morley reveals himself as the ideal observer, ruthlessly judgmental, almost freshly generous in his regard for fellow music writers (Banga, Penman, Tosches, Roop) even as he declares them all to be as redundant and last century as lighthouse keepers. After *Nothing*, the autobiographical urge is upon him. We just know there's lots more in there, waiting to come out. When does that leave me? Sitting in a room, unable to get it all out of my head. □



# CLASSIC MATERIAL: THE HIP-HOP ALBUM GUIDE OLIVER WANG (EDITOR)

ECW PRESS PRK #15 95  
BY TOM FICHMANO

Two hands of taxonomy, one commercial and one educational, will eventually clasp nips unpunctured necks and squeeze it hard. At Berklee College in 30 years' time, the children of 5000 Joe Lowme scandalfalls will hole themselves up in justice rooms and try to 'do' Biggie. Once that happens, the commercial industry and reorganization of the music will begin in earnest, and promotional catalogues of recommended buys like *Classic Material*, an alphabetical skip through nips' greatest long-play moments, will be rewritten in Times Roman and hardbound into history with both hands in place, and in less time than it takes to slurp, *HipHop*'s enphatic black, brown and beigeless will be retouched as another cultural contribution to the red, white and blue. And this despite the very best efforts of other conscious African-Americans or conscientious non-blacks: efforts represented by the writers here.

That America east its young is hardly a secret any more, and the critical cronies of Public Enemy's anti- and Eminem's anti-emo-Elvis are either race-picks through criticism or the defensiveness of the post-WASP academy. At the back of the book, the 25 contributors, mostly US and Canadian, begin with histories at The Source and XXL, give biographies reflecting the drive towards category that defines the cultural and political segregation of American life,

whether radio formats or housing demographics "born in Birmingham, Alabama, of Chinese and Native Hawaiian ancestry", "Asian Jew, enjoys eating knishes". Defending the right to represent is important to the writers, and rightly, as they know they are about to take a history scratched in and began to set in stone (whether they like it or not). Editor Oliver Wang defends his project, "the music needs to be talked about, evaluated, critical standards set", but he also knows what's up with it. His introduction is an eloquent defence of the book that acknowledges its inherent contradictions, between the buyer's guide as canon and *HipHop*'s "overcrossing" style, objective appraisal and culture "cheerleading", and, most importantly, between the relative importance of album to singles in defining *HipHop* history: taking the album as the critical token means that the 12" drive-up of the 80s is underrepresented, and that 100 one-hit wonders (but what hits) are absent. *Classic Material* isn't talking about history as such, just the history you can still buy at Sam Goody. Sooner or later, though, they'll be much the same thing.

With Mos Def, Dave Tompkins, Peter Shapiro, Hae Hui and David Toop all contributing, many of the articles, stylistic twists and critical turns will be familiar to *Wire* readers. And as this is by design a celebratory volume, so there are few truly surprising critical insights. But they're still there, like Serena Ken's article on Brand Nubian's *One For All*, which interprets the group's Islamic cultural nationalism with a reference to 9/11 that seems by turns absurd,

plausible and faintly important. Dave Tompkins tries his best to conduct his essay on EPMD's *Strictly Business* and *Unfinished Business* in sober, encyclopaedic entry style, but he quickly loses his balance and ends up in the referential hellfire that makes him one of the best music critics in print. Tompkins's tick is a list of allusion that gets deep inside the music's rhetorical schemes. Other writers can let lyrical over-identification cloud their critical vision, though. Elizabeth Mendez Brown's thoughtful essay on Jay-Z's *Reasonable Doubt* huster persona concludes that "you can't knock the hustle" even after spending hundreds of words doing exactly that.

It's just a harmless record guide, but all the classic symptoms of canon-building are there in germ form. A spurious teleology of influence is detectable when Zoroaster Simmons writes that without MC Lyte and Queen Latifah "there would have been no LL Cool J, Fresh Brown, or Lauryn Hill", and when Gang Starr's *Daily Operation* and Step In The Arena are included as albums that represent the DNA of "real *HipHop*" while the equally vital but later *Moment 47* is omitted. Elsewhere, thematic articles form scattered albums into coherent historical visions. That's not necessarily a problem: Joseph Pate's essay on the Native Tongues collective is deft and concise. But there's no reason that MC Lyte's *Like A Rock*, as good an album as almost any here, should be regarded as a solecistic chapter containing just itself and Queen Latifah's undistinguished *All Aflak The Queen* in

his introduction. Wang all but apologizes for the exclusion of female artists "who have made more noise on single releases than albums, the 'Roxanne' saga of the 80s being a case in point", and Lauryn Hill is the only other female artist represented here.

But a number of the contributors are women, and that means that racism posturing is often regarded less conclusively than it might have been, casual misogyny rarely passed over in silence. It's not only in its attitudes towards gender that *Classic Material* betrays fantasy, myth and reality in delicate, and arguable, ways. Jay-Z's *Black Album* is notorious for its *Ready To Die* and *Life After Death* negative image and truth with sensitivity. Elsewhere, some of the African-American contributors attempt to summon up a kind of emotional content for albums that goes beyond musical characteristics, and begin to construct symbolic identities for rap in the collective black memory. Ernest Hardy succeeds in his article on the Queens, Reginald Dennis fails in his essay on Eric B. & Rakim's *Raid In Fall*. Two timeless anthems aside, taken as a whole this is a record that has sounded weak for almost as long as it's been regarded as an unimpeachable classic. Maybe realizing this, Denise Barry mentions the record, instead launching into an urgent rhetorical nips pitched somewhere between uptown demagogues and midtown messiah. It's those kinds of voices that keep *Classic Material* this side of scholarship, though; for now, the book is the critical equivalent of a mace. But it's a dispatch note for history. □

# LOUIS ANDRESENSEN: THE ART OF STEALING TIME MIRIAM ZEGERS (EDITOR)

ARC PUBLICATIONS PRK #15 95

BY PHILIP CLANK

Louis Andriessen is the most recognizable face of Holland's combative New Music scene. Born in Utrecht in 1939, it's often assumed that Andriessen is a cortical European despite of his American minimalist after all, his music is anchored by steady pulsations and builds from repeating melodic cells that evolve and transform over the duration of a piece. Despite this shared trademark, the belchous surface of Andriessen's scores contrast loudly with the Zen-like mantras of Riley, Reich and La Monte Young. His music is drawn by a background in Marxist political philosophy and a corresponding loathing for the classical music establishment that can border on the paranoid. *The Art Of Stealing Time* is itself a sideways at the Romantic tendency in Mahler's music to, as Andriessen perceives it, manipulate the listener with sudden accelerandos leading to orchestral diaphanous. Andriessen's genius are JS Bach and Igor Stravinsky, and he is relatively respectful of music that is over-democratic. "Charlie Parker is cold, cold, cold," he exclaims during a discussion of bebop. "Good art is cold, it has reservations... you hear the violence but you also hear the control".

This new collection of Andriessen's writings

documents his philosophical and musical development from the early 80s to the present day. Andriessen emerges as an ebullient debater who isn't immune from the occasional demonstrative rant himself. The book falls into three parts, with a long biographical introduction leading to Andriessen's writings on the philosophy and aesthetics of music, and then to detailed discussions of the background and techniques of his own work. But Andriessen begins by elucidating on the all-important relevance that stealing time has for him — "In Baroque music, musical time was merely lent; in the 19th century time was actually stolen". Andriessen is referring to the convention in the Baroque and classical eras for musicians to push and pull the beat around a bar, but to always make amends for these expressive liberties by 'paying back' the beat. "If a musician holds one note slightly longer, then he gives back the time this takes by making the remaining notes of the beat correspondingly shorter". Andriessen approves of this method (known as 'rubato') ideologically because of the internal dialectic it creates in performance. Conversely, he writes, in Mahler "rubato is expanded to such an extent that time is no longer 'made good'", and Andriessen views the result as an expressive self-indulgence.

Dialectical thinking is central to Andriessen's aesthetic. He believes that the basis of the debate between the modern and postmodern

begins with early 19th century philosopher Hegel's theory of dialectics that stated two opposing positions (thesis and antithesis) leads to a high unity (synthesis). The problem with the continued use of the symphony orchestra, Andriessen contends, is that its feudal system-like construct stifles the possibility of synthesis. Besides, orchestras are only in the service of a small minority of composers and orchestral musicians themselves are obliged to play new pieces they dislike simply because it's written into their contract.

In 1968, Andriessen, Misha Mengelberg and Peter Schat offered an alternative by staging a 'political activist experimental' concert in Amsterdam's Carmé theatre for which each orchestral player was recruited on the grounds of their openness to New Music. Four years later, Andriessen used similar principles when he formed his De Volharding ensemble, a collective of classical players and improvisers modelled on the instrumentation of the classic jazz big band. The jazz players were chosen because they could read music well, but also because they were not "too individualistic".

Andriessen drops that last bombshell statement into his text rather too casually, and I'm guessing Stravinsky's dykes was Andriessen's goal, but the marshalled tone of De Volharding's playing can seem strangely monistic and totalitarian as a result. Andriessen often references the Ellington, Basie and Stan Kenton

groups in his statements, but the quality of big band jazz surely lies in the leader's ability to harness so many individual voices to a common cause. Listening to Ellington's saxophone section is so thrilling because it's possible to tell where Johnny Hodges ends and Paul Gonsky begins — normally, De Volharding channels musicians into a unified sound that's every bit as genetic and controlling as the symphony orchestra.

Andriessen describes how when he came to compose De Stijl for the San Francisco Symphony Orchestra in 1964, he rebuked the orchestra by "throwing out half the instruments and replacing them with saxophones, Hammond organs and bass guitars" so that it wouldn't sound like an orchestra. Part of me worries that this might be a crude and expedient solution to the acute cultural problems posed by orchestras, a bit like using an air freshener to dispose of a bad smell when, in fact, a plumber is needed. Nevertheless, Andriessen's ideas are always provocative and worthwhile, and he writes with a dry, deprecating sense of humour. His 1966 article "Vindictisme, Icky drinks and the anti-gate" is a brilliant discussion of the role that question plays in music, while his tongue-in-cheek description of a trip he made to China in 1992 offers that all too rare combination of observational humour and weighty musical analysis. □



Punk Piss at the blood feast: Lester Bangs

## MAINLINES, BLOOD FEASTS, BAD TASTE: A LESTER BANGS READER

JOHN MORTHLAND (EDITOR)

SERPENT'S TAIL, Pbk. \$29.95

BY DAVID KEENEAN

Just how many Lester Bangs are there? If you were going solely on the composite portrait assembled by Greil Marcus across the space of his world-beating Bangs anthology, 1987's *Psychotic Reactions And Carburetor Dung*, you'd have an image of a drooping, death-dwarf-whispering disciple of horrible noise, an amphetamine-huffing punk who championed effluvia two chord garage punk, "litterate chaos" and free music over any of the rigid, satanic-muscle dope peddled by the big guns, across a series of critiques written in blood that stashed as much light on his own hang-ups, neuroses and truths as it did on the quality of the songs within. Then *Mainlines, Blood Feasts*,

*Bad Taste* comes along, a companion volume assembled by his literary executor, rock writer and friend John Mortlund, and while there's just as much revealing personal detail as in anything else that Bangs wrote, in comparison to *Psychotic Reactions*, the Bangs we have here is a full-blown classmate, knee-deep in the canon, obsessing over The Stones (according to Mortlund, Bangs "favors them and bolls 'em"), Miles Davis, Bob Marley, Bob Dylan, and The Sex Pistols (OK, so some things were change).

When he compiled *Psychotic Reactions*, Marcus admitted that he had made no attempt to make it in any way representative, and Mortlund includes many of the more historically significant pieces that Marcus deliberately omitted, things like his first published review, a caustic, overly hip attack on The MC5's *Kick Out The Jams* that he later retracted, and his last piece, "If Or Were A

Carpenter", where, out of a list that includes great hardcore groups like The Flatheads, The Mousers and The Germs, he plumps for The Circle Jerks and The Exploited as the only ones who provide "unaboyed satisfaction" — ooh! But there are some great picks. "Bob Dylan's Alliance With Mafia Chic" is a scabrous, closely researched attack on Dylan's deification of the grungy "Gang" Joey Gallo on the *Desire* album track "Boyz", described by Bangs as "one of the most mindlessly anonal pieces of regrettably nonenlightened bullshit ever recorded".

In Nick Tosche's moving remembrance of Bangs, he described him as "a romantic in the gravest, saddest, best and most ridiculous sense of that worn-out word. He couldn't merely go to bed with a woman, he had to fall in love with her. He couldn't merely dislike something; he had to rail and rage against it." Bangs is often at his best when he feels he's been let down, and

a huge bulk of the book consists of raging yet articulate responses to betrayals of faith, the most entertaining being rabel assaults on the post-Elio Stones and electro-era Miles Davis.

Outside of all the railing and raging, there are extracts from a never completed teenage autobiography, another tussle with Metal Machine Music, a farcistic piece on Patti Smith's *Horses* that'll have you pulling it from the shelf, and an almost penetrating exchange with Don Van Vliet. That it might lack some of the focus and mythic power of *Psychotic Reactions* probably says more about the Bangs than it want to believe in than the Bangs that actually existed, and in a way *Mainlines, Blood Feasts, Bad Taste*, alongside Jim DeRogatis's biography, is a further step towards rescuing him from the myth — "a junkie for the glimpses of the pit" — that in the end was partially responsible for his own destruction. For that alone it's a necessary addition to the shelf. □

## YOUNG, GIFTED AND BLACK: THE STORY OF TROJAN RECORDS

MICHAEL DE KONINGH & LAURENCE KANE-HONEYSETT  
SANTUARY PUBLISHING Pbk. £12.99

BY STEVE BARKER

One of the finest songs penned by the late Dennis Brown deals with "The Hat", that never gets told. This self-published vanity project from the label that continues to dominate the space allocated to reggae in the UK's major stores would require the addition of multiple other "hats" in order to qualify legitimately as the full and chequered history of Trojan Records. Even an explanation of Trojan's long and strange relationship with Lee "Scratchy" Perry throughout the entirety of his fantastically perverse career would alone occupy a whole unbelievable and probably litigious chapter if any writer was foolish enough to risk his health in tackling the subject. Trojan's impetuous to dominate dates back 30 years to a time when the company commanded 75 per cent of reggae sales,

since when the label has taken a peculiarly high-handed approach to competitors in the reggae record market that it was responsible for creating. Dave Henley's old great Rebel Music compilation and his all album Creation Rockers series, plus the wonderful sequences of albums lovingly masterminded by Steve Barrow in his short time with the company, set the exemplary standards to which others continue to aspire. The latest transparent attempt at reggae hegemony was a recent edition of *Mighty* magazine, which carried a lone Upsetter 7" single, an interview with Scratchy and a piece mysteriously lacking an "advertising feature" disclaimer with recommendations on how to buy the producer's early work that is all owned by... Trojan Records! The fact that unmissable work from Scratchy is issued by Island, Heartbeat, Pressure Sounds, Blood & Fire, etc. is seemingly of secondary importance to the deal.

Despite these observations, the *Blackstar* hagiography penned by two label associates still provides a most valuable and revealing insight on the early, fascinating history of the company

and its consequent business development through the 60s and 70s until "the accountants" finally took over. All this comes directly supported by an employees' largely white — in fact, all white, with the exception of one lone co-owner and main shareholder, Indian-Jamaican Lee Gophar. There was a high turnover of staff, but most of these boys' testimonies prove they really loved the music. Their revelations uncovering countless wacky business runnings really makes this book an indispensable read, and could have provided a hilarious source for a late Ealing comedy (*Carry On Slanking?*). Rob Bell tells the story behind the mysterious appearance of thousands of Trojan singles in the marketplace. Employees carried truckloads of poor-selling 45s to the municipal dump in St Albans so that their purchase value could be written-off by the taxman. Even more enterprising, though, was the scam by persons unknown to dig up the tunes and sell them to local speed in future the local taxmen demanded physical destruction of all future written-off stock, with Trojan staff forced

to visibly perform the deed with sledgehammers and drills!

Understandably, given the typical reggae label had no with "over-dominant" Jamaican artists and "manipulative" producers, there are few direct interviews from such sources. In fact, only Derrick Morgan, Bob Andy and engineer Syd Buckner were available for comment. So the balance that could have been achieved by the real stars of Trojan Records — the singers, musicians, DJs, producers and engineers — is largely ignored or sourced through anecdotal quotes from contemporary media. But at least their side of the story is covered in the complete Trojan album and single discographies that have only made their appearances in specialist "aggregates". This coverage includes not only the complex of Trojan's vast array of subsidiaries, many of which were created to issue the works of specific producers — most notably Upsetter, but also a potent history of each imprint — an indispensable tool for the army of vinyl collectors whose numbers mysteriously increase year on year. □



Bebop Baudelaire: Chet Baker

## DEEP IN A DREAM: THE LONG NIGHT OF CHET BAKER

JAMES GAVIN  
WITH IAN PENMAN

Chet Baker's whole relevant life was some say a recovery, most say dedicated retreat from pain. But is this really so restful? We all but the voice we'd rather wish away, or had we but the voice turn into a whistling sound which redistributes our terrors and sorrows on the stage where you live — among the ears and is and hearts and tears of countless unknown Others.

This *Dream of Night*, these shallow shallow deeps — go to make up a lifelong tale that is both extraordinary and extraordinarily mundane. One long, repetitive, self-playing plaint. One long over-so brief song — which Chet found he could effortlessly summon anytime in the 1950s and never shed the sound of shifting heartbeats, in closeup: the sound of teardrops, forming. And that was that: Chet, his art, his emotion, never grew or changed or found any new map to steer by. (Not unless other necessity intruded: as when a doubtful drug-related street hearing made him more active, as well as figuratively, much noisier.)

Two things should be said right off. One is that James Gavin does a note-perfect job. I had sworn off my own biography pages, but *Deep in a Dream* is both grippingly, glisteningly detailed, with a full white rainbow of POVs, compassion, care, chastisement, disabell, honesty, honor.

Gavin manages to tell an awful (truly awful) tale of repetition and not only is it not an awful state road (which most junkie lives are, in situ, ultimately: 24m TV on endless repeat) it's an unexpected revelation on a number of levels.

Gavin finds what there is to value in Baker — as person and musician — when required; he also tries to untangle the (to outsiders) truly bewildering ability Baker had to attract and maintain a back-up line of lovers, roadies, toadies, endless helpers/ethers, he's especially good on how Europe (Italy and France foremost) pretty much kept Baker alive, installing him as their en's very own wet dream poet: raucous! Sisyphean rock, Antaud in chinos, young Rimbaud with a hem, bebop Baudelaire.

The other thing which might be said — as the preceding maybe hints — is that this is not really a book for jazz music fans, per se. There is some good stuff here on self-damned young pianist Dick Twardzik and the odd passive-aggressive thing he and Baker (maybe) had going. Plus, some flashbacks comments from other top-era stars, testifying to just how shockingly huge and natural a talent Baker initially possessed — a necessary corrective and reminder that this was once a trumpet player other trumpet players venerated, before he decided to take up permanent residence inside Ice Station Zero. Baker was jazz in at least this sense: he may not have had much to 'say' or only the one some thing he kept saying, but the way he said it: you couldn't add or subtract

a single note without wrecking its essence.

This *Dream* is something like anti-hagiography: a study of how, in the mid-20th century a man's looks, his 'charm' — and his (in all senses) minimal talent — took him various places. High and low, rich and poor, good times and bustled, Gavin is acute on the difference between the Kodachrome icon and his actual diurnal Real. In early 60s Italy Baker was idealized, to a Beatlemania degree, and many fans started to ape his New Cool Look, which soon became the dominant *dolce vita* mode: summertime tops, dark Rays, sandals. All of which — all kinds of everything Chet — were simply an accommodation to the Habit, which distorted all of Chet's 'choices': shades hid how pined the pin-up was; loose suits were less likely to pick up stray blood spots, and sandals (which became a lifelong trademark) were the only footwear injectable-swollen feet could bear.

Where or what exactly all this 'peas' came out of or got him is a harder question to answer. Baker offered wildly different versions of his life — and of different incidents in it — to different people, depending on what he was on or after... or, maybe, what was too painful to bear. And so — he was borderline 'sane', or maybe not. Possibly homophobic?, or maybe completely otherwise. The worst person imaginable — and, like, couldn't care less... or was consumed with guilt. He didn't know what love was... but, on a good night, could still reduce strangers (and cynical sademen, chastened ex-wives) to tears

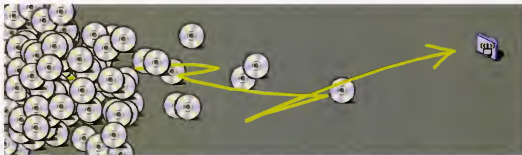
with his love songs. If Gavin can't settle on 'definitive' answers to such questions it's not a biographer's failure — it's the nature of the Chet(ist), the beast, the myths he wrapped around himself like a neurotic Scares 'n' Stripes.

Long term addictions — though 'addiction' seems too timid a word for Baker's gluttonous, single-minded pursuit of 24/7 near OD (I've read just about every junkie narrative extant, and this out pigs them all) — finally renders fine print explication futile, dull, a sambre shuffle on the lip of a void. The secret is there is no secret. Maybe. Use his death (a Friday 13th fall from an Amsterdam needle district crash pad) — all these posthumous conspiracy theories, each more outlandish than the last, and the unexplained absence and the ill-starred *Romance* and... he just felt, because falling was hard (and maybe, all) he did. Like the man sang: I fall in love too easily. (Now, just rethink that "too easily".)

Finally, and all too fittingly, the best quote turns up at the very last minute. Merely on the last page, where (before we all fall away) Ruth Taylor, one of the very many widow women, the very many patient heroines who played Other Women in his life to Miss Kuros, drops by to say "Chet's aura is overcelebrated. Somehow his lack of personality became his personality. The tromba d'oro (golden trumpet) and the good looks and all that crap — if Chet had looked like Mickey Mouse, we wouldn't be having this conversation." □

# Cross Platform

Sound in other media. This month: A rash of online music blogs are opening up a new space for music criticism. By Kodwo Eshun



The recent closure of music magazines *Seven* and *Musik* confirmed what we already know: 99 per cent of music print media is fatally compromised by its lack of vision and its commercial imperatives. Online, though, it's a different story: In the last three years the *Weblog* (or *blog*) has proved the right platform for a wave of smart, impassioned writers, critics and theorists. Some of these, like Simon Reynolds, Ian Penman, Philip Sherburne ([mmlma.blogspot.com](http://mmlma.blogspot.com)) and Sasha Freire-Jones ([sf.blogspot.com](http://sf.blogspot.com)) use their blogs as the id to their print media ego; the real-deal critic's cut as opposed to the populist offline adrift.

At its best, the performative cross-chat of collective conversation these thinkers provoke can be bracing. As bloggers respond to a powerfully argued essay with challenges and disagreements, standards stay high and the sense that music writing is an adventure of thought is thrilling after long years of print-diminished exploration.

At its worst, however, an online forum such as I Love Music leaves an offputting smell of territorialising. The tightly polished ultra-cynicism of American critics come off as especially clementine-thin. The most intriguing bloggers are those that write/publish exclusively online; naturally enough, they've worked hardest to create a specific Web-based approach. Perhaps the first writer to optimise the blog capacity for community was Tom Ewing, whose three years and running mini-empire of weekly blogs ([www.netcomuk.co.uk/~tewing/singlesb.html](http://www.netcomuk.co.uk/~tewing/singlesb.html)) — New York London Paris Munich/NYLP (the daily update), I Love Music (the online forum), Tanya Headon's I Hate Music ( hilariously snide occasional blog), and now club night Freaky Trigger — constitutes a coterie/community/clique that takes pride and pains in taking pop seriously. Every blog founds itself on a love for certain sounds, and Ewing is at his best on 2003-02-era bootleg/bastard pop and chart hits: scrambled zones that allow him to access an ethical urgency in which music writing is as serious as your life.

Like all bloggers, Ewing is driven by a committed generosity: no one's getting paid, the network is its own reward. Scan the archives of Freaky Trigger ([www.freakytrigger.co.uk](http://www.freakytrigger.co.uk)), though, and many contributors are frank about the toll the gift economy takes on your sensibilities; burnout and depression are ever-present dangers. Freaky Trigger is no exception: overwhelmed and under-resourced, the site

took time out to regroup and reformat before returning last month.

Besides Ewing, the best bloggers to emerge from the Freaky Trigger gang are the elusive Robin Carmody, renowned for his Radiophonic Workshop essays, the Melbourne-based Tim Finney, and Marcello Carlini. Finney's *skykicking* ([skykicking.tmpod.com](http://skykicking.tmpod.com)) is rhythm analysis at its most finessed. Aged 19, this whizzed snatches moments away from his law studies to detail the intricacies of Garage, R&B and Microhouse. Finney's infinite capacity for degrees of disorientation makes him the critic the neophytes deserve.

Carlini, on the other hand, uses his blog *The Church Of Me* ([cookham.blogspot.com](http://cookham.blogspot.com)) as a platform in which musical analysis simultaneously operates as a grieving/reckoning with the passing of his beloved partner Laura. As a result, Carlini specialises in challengingly sonorous disquisitions that return him to the 70s of AMM and Sensational Alex Harvey Band. Just when I had him pegged as a younger and more generous minded Ian MacDonald, he pulls me up sharpish with spicy pieces on AudioBoys and Girls Aloud.

In his occasional reviews for *Uncut*, Carlini seems cramped and awkward; the blog format allows him to stretch out, unencumbered. Doubtless it's this quality that appealed to Simon Reynolds, who launched his own *Blasphemy* in January this year. With its pointed attacks on whatever he feels like, *Blasphemy* now outshines his long running *Blissout* Website. Perhaps its needling provocations were necessary because a slew of blogs emerged in the subsequent months, most notably those of animator Matthew Ingram, poet Luka, lecturer Mark De Rossio and Wire writer Ian Penman.

Certainly blogs were always waiting for the Penman, whose *Pilbox* ([apawboy.blogspot.com](http://apawboy.blogspot.com)) began life as a startling flow of trades, quotations and screeds against the mediascape of war. Nowadays, though, *Pilbox* has deluged into the associative play of the Penmanesque signifier; much to my surprise, however, I often find it hard going; freed from the editorial leech, the progressive sliding of Penman sometimes becomes overly hermetic, easy to admire, easier to lose the plotlines.

More readable than *Pilbox*, I find, is Mark De Rossio's *K-Punk* ([k-punk.blogspot.com](http://k-punk.blogspot.com)), which champions the English neoromantic canon of John Foxera Ultravox, Associates, David Sylvian and Dr Who. That said, it's time for personal disclosure, as Americans like to say: De Rossio is a friend of mine;

and K-Punk acts as the home for an aesthetic sensibility that I've been lucky enough to share since the late 80s.

So it's no surprise I enjoy K-Punk more than *Pilbox* or *The Astronaut's Notepad* ([www.astronautnotepad.blogspot.com](http://www.astronautnotepad.blogspot.com)). With impressively sustained features on free folk and Royal Trux, Melbourne-based doctoral candidate Jon's blog is, all the same, slightly preening and smug in tone. You could say that's an occupational hazard with blogs, but the best ones manage to avoid it.

Case in point number one: Ingram's blog, *That Was A Naughty Bit Of Crap* (a fine phrase of his departed father, [www.hollowearth.org/blog.html](http://www.hollowearth.org/blog.html)) which links to his smart parallel audiovisual site *Hollow Earth*. ANBOC offers a confident knowledge of everything from Les Hurts Des Fondations Maeght releases to Primo remixes to the best gangsta-Techno 12"s to King Sunny Ade releases that is truly startling. Ingram really knows software and is beautifully inclusive with his expertise. His Lists, which are really revisionist essays that overturn everything you thought you knew about music, always come with scans of record sleeves, often with MP3s and exceptional Paul Austerlitz certifiers.

Best of all, Ingram is helplessly, even obsessively funny, a trait epitomised by *The Church Of Me*, his deliriously garbled Rolling Stones album-by-album history that anachronised Rolling Stone style liner note historiography to heights of delicious invention.

Case in point number two: On first reading *Heronbone* ([heronbone.blogspot.com](http://heronbone.blogspot.com)), you might think its author Luka is an über-Garage head deeply tuned in to the East London pirate scene — which he is. But the real genius of *Heronbone* is the way Luka factors this literary sensitivity into a series of diastolic meditations on poetry, injunctions to greatness, the despair of work, the value of introspection, the aesthetics of flow, quotations, odes to the urban flora and fauna of Bow, Hackney and Stratford, and miniature prose poems of three or four not-quite homonyms and synonyms.

Equally at home with the oeuvre of Dizzee Rascal and Fernando Pessoa, *Heronbone* is deeply original. Music magazines cannot prepare you for the sheer surprise of a blog that locates itself between WG Sebald, Wiley from Rool Deep and Ian Sinclair. From word to phrase, clause to lyric, sentence to paragraph, *Heronbone* is sheer greatness: a vivid justification of the blog at its best and brightest. □



Barley Hendricks's *Fela: Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen* at NYC's New Museum (left); images from David Byrne's *Envisioning Emotional Epistemological Information*

## MY CINEMA FOR THE EARS: THE MUSIQUE CONCRÈTE OF FRANCIS DHOMONT AND PAUL LANSKY

BRIDGE 9117 DVD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

"There is a certain beauty in noise," says Canadian musician/composer Francis Dhomont at the start of director Uri Aumiller's 59-minute documentary, conducted in French with subtitled versions for English and German viewers. Dhomont casts himself as an explorer, a semiotopic voyager through the world of sound, open to accident and surprise. He goes on to cite Debussy's observation that "People have written too much music for paper. Music is made for the ear." The sound sources Dhomont encounters and abstracts in the course of the film range from that banal staple of the concert hall, Vivaldi's *Four Seasons*, to that equally banal staple of environmental sound art, chirping pond frogs. His interest is in innate qualities of sounds, as heard when they are dislodged from their habitual context and become something new and unexpected.

Aumiller samples the natural environment of rural Canada and compiles a cinema collage of images. Dhomont mixes explicit correlations between eye and ear, between film making and studio-based composition, in conversation with younger composer Christian Cole. Embedded in the imagery is a sequence where Dhomont stalks a sheepdog to capture barks for his transformation of Vivaldi's "Spring." He then digitally processes the obliging canine's howl and later goads a viola player to give a faithful instrumental rendering of the barking in keeping with Vivaldi's written instructions.

Shifting to the cityscape of Montréal, Aumiller makes a patchwork of urban samples and Dhomont converses with Paul Lansky, masterly American transformer of found sound. Lansky is also dedicated to revealing, through exploration and artifice, music slashed away socially in everyday noise. The composers discuss the importance of recognizing sources of sound materials and identifying the gestures that generated them, a persistent issue of debate in the electroacoustic field. Lansky explains his conception of music as "savesdropping into an

imaginary space" and is seen turning recorded small talk into arresting music in his studio at Princeton University, New Jersey.

The last seven minutes are given over to presentation of "Another Spring," Dhomont's transfiguration of Vivaldi's "Prestemps," with Aumiller's correspondingly processed visuals. It's possible on this DVD to access just audio tracks — one by Dhomont, three by Lansky — that fully justify the title's allusion to cinema for the ears. Yet in the film itself Aumiller's synthetic visual accompaniment is far from superfluous and the conversation of these two important practitioners, while raising unanswered questions, sheds light on some of the assumptions, methods, means and implications of *Musique concrète* now.

## BLACK PRESIDENT: THE ART AND LEGACY OF FELA ANIKULAPO-KUTI NEW YORK NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART USA

BY HUA WEI

There will always be those who see the museumification of pop culture as surrender, but you'd be hard pressed to find another figure for which this kind of institutionalization makes more sense than Fela. This isn't simply because of his invention of *Afrobeats* or his confrontational assaults on Nigeria's rotten political system. It is, as the literature for this exhibition states, because of his "conformational Mistletoe": he was never an easy life to understand. There were times when Fela was clear, his music functioning as a directive to go forth and overturn the state; there were other times when he was foggy mind, but even then there was no death of followers eager to execute his charge. Fela's imagined nation was, and still is, a cult in the truest sense of the word.

All the complications one imagines when the cult pays homage to their beacon are on display at this scattered assembly of 34 contemporary visual artists. There are brightly adorned shrines and altars. There are apologetic seeking to rationalize Fela the man's shortcomings. There are places with no clear relation to anything except that the artists were inspired at some point by a discovery of Fela's music and

therefore everything they do has something to do with him, you know? But there's also an intensely hopeful spirit and wide-ranging dazzle to the show that occasionally approaches Fela's beautiful complexities.

Ghanaian Lemi's original album cover art for the 70s albums *Scrow*, *Isas And Blood* and *Monkey Banana* are on display. Barley Hendricks's *Fela: Amen, Amen, Amen, Amen* is a garish spoof of Renaissance altarpieces with a stigmata-smoking, scotch-gobbling, crotch-jumped Fela at its centre. A small outline of the African continent squeezed by a crown of thorns rests on its chest. Sanford Biggers' *Alphabetic Ways* features couples of couples having sex. Each couple is meant to represent an astrological sign and the entire image is reflected on a mirror on the ground. It implies a "How To" sex guide, dancefloor and cosmological altarpiece; and *gash* (sense a trend?) as its colours are, it is a pretty appropriate blurring of the personal, intellectual and spiritual.

Olü Ogbari on Nigerian Graffiti features a series of paintings on hung fibre mats. Again, the spirit of Fela is obvious as Ogbari brilliantly mixes abstraction (shapes and colours patterned in carefully disciplined arrangements) with slogans (such as "I [behave] my contri" or "I no go lie down"). One of the most striking paintings is Wangchul Mul's *Ni Mema*, a very pink and surreal depiction of Fela's staunchly feminist mother performing a triple castration on nefarious serpents. As fanciful as it sounds, it's a powerful image that reminds us that the prerequisite for giving Fela's cult isn't a blind devotion to the man, but an open embrace of his brave sense of hope and imagination.

## DAVID BYRNE ENVISIONING EMOTIONAL EPISTEMOLOGICAL INFORMATION

SPRING VHS LAS 36654/36659 HEIK + DVD

BY BRIAN CULLUM

There is something distinctly mid-20th century about PowerPoint, Microsoft's ubiquitous presentation software. It responds — with its placidly "neutral" iconography and awkward anthropomorphism (the Auto Content Wizard as

suburban steam spritz) — to a specifically 1950s notion of technological convenience, providing the hapless middle manager with a reasonable facsimile of thought, style, efficiency and personality from the boardroom to the lecture hall. PowerPoint promises to turn blankly statistical dullfanny into corporate charisma in a mouse-click blink. As David Byrne puts it, it "makes any idiot appear to know what he or she is talking about." At the more suggestive, then, is Byrne's decision, with his feed for the fantasies of post-50s American suburbia, to use PowerPoint to fashion, of all things, a work of art.

Envisioning Emotional Epistemological Information is a lavishly slicked-up artefact with the look of a corporate prospectus, catalogue or report. Its accompanying DVD presents five of Byrne's PowerPoint experiments: organic appropriations of the software's stock imagery of quantification, analysis and narrative drift. He sets the seamless flowchart logic of the program into giddy motion, arrows and icons floating in abstract parody of supposedly rational thought processes. He has an idea, set out in the book's Ego-like aphorisms — "keeping the software fuzzy", "business agreements to a gameplay" — that he can embrace the process, capture something "unstable but filled with love". But this "chaos as process" aesthetic is already wired to the business mind, already co-opted as the management-manual banality of lateral thinking. Byrne's "noise" showing of the system masks merely replicating the corporate embrace of the haphazard and the spontaneous.

EEEE works best when eschewing knowing distance for a naive yet loud approach. The first presentation *Architectures Of Comparison* is like an animated Pachelbel drawing, set to a Vivaldi soundtrack, while the last, "Phylogenomics", is a fractured photographic record of New York's Madame Tussauds, accompanied by the second movement of Legn's Piano Concerto. The three new Byrne compositions which accompany the other sections are by turns serene and bubbling electronics, but again oddly dated and muted in their notion of an adequate soundtrack to technological detachment, to the point where it's a relief what they were in pastoral semiotics, as if Byrne has spotted, and skirted, some secret complicity between the laptop-



Scenes from Fred Fith's *Step Across The Border* (left); Terrie Thaemlitz's *Love Bomb*

tethered musician and the 'poor-person' PowerPort user.

## STEP ACROSS THE BORDER

WINTER & WINTER #15001 DVD

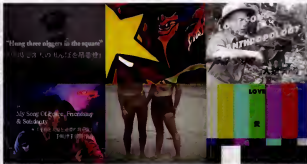
BY JULIAN COWLEY

Fred Fith's wonderful music for *Step Across The Border* (on Roc Rec) has been in circulation since 1990. Now it can be experienced as intended, bound into director Nicolas Humbert and Werner Penzel's celebrated 80-minute black and white celluloid presentation. Near the start Jonas Mekas, a key figure in the New York New cinema movement, explains the "butterfly wing theory" that try to events resembles through the fabric of reality with unpredictable, perhaps disproportionate consequences. Later, Fith talks of the warning of his own youthful belief that music could alter the world, his desire suspended by commitment to engagement wherever possible with workable circumstances. In *Step Across The Border*, his music is cast as that modest yet meaningful wing flap cited by Mekas.

The presence of Mekas and one of his main inspirations Robert Frank, eminent photographer and maker of the legendary Beat documentary *Pull My Daisy*, signals that this is a film conscious of cinema's alternative history. Its collage fragments glimpses of city streets, landscapes and interiors, concerts and conversations contain numerous allusions to film. At one point Fith looks as if he's walked straight out of De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves*. More generally, he's the border-crossing nomad, tired traveling, performing, talking with friends in

England, across Europe, in New York and Japan. Humbert and Penzel disclose the unlikely poetry of a car park at night, noisy city streets, trains and traffic. Wind blows newspaper caught on a fence and wool on a wire in Yorkshire. Fith and some sheep exchange stares. Visual and auditory rhythms coincide in a dough-making machine, a garbage bin being emptied, raking of a Zen garden, a fabulously ingenious Japanese bamboo bird-scare. Fith goes shopping, wrapping paper raffles, then the contents are emptied into bowls, and Fith improvises at his kitchen sink. He quotes Henri Cartier-Bresson asserting that photography is a way of life, and the film shows that Fith's own way of life is improvising across boundaries.

He makes music formally and informally with friends, conducts a group performing his scores, plays keyboard and rattle with a small child, and fiddle with a flock of guilts. He smiles, laughs and sings a lot, vocalising his tunes. He says that making connection between his voice and his instruments usually transformed his idea of what music can be. Exposure to the blues was important in this respect. Singers are allotted camera: Nico Margulies, Ja Bittov, Arto Lindsay. Fith quotes Russian director Andrei Tarkovsky on the creative imperative of making contact with others, adding, "Self expression, for me, is not what this is about." No fixed position that has to be expressed; cultivation of nomadic identity still seemed a novel concept in 1990. Documentary trends merely to reflect what is. *Step Across The Border*, on the other hand, enacts the terms of an improvised life.



The DVD additionally has an appelling selection of outtakes and performance excerpts, including bluesman John Dee Holman in a hotel room, Charles Hayward bashing dustbins, Cyro Baptista sounding a monochord, and Fith in various contexts including deeds in New York with Tom Gae and John Zorn, and in Britain with Tim Hodgkinson.

## TERRIE THAEMLITZ LOVE BOMB: COMPLETE VIDEO TRANSLATION AND BONUS MATERIALS

COMARSONE 000 VHS (NTSC)

BY KEN HOLLINGS

Originally coined to describe the process whereby newcomers to a religious cult are showered with overwhelming displays of affection, the term 'love bombing' denotes a state of positive confusion in the face of aggressive emotional manipulation. Seen from this perspective, Thaemlitz's *Love Bomb* project constitutes an act of cultural deprogramming in which love is ultimately revealed as a socially encoded pathological condition. Compelling audiovisual reinterpretations of texts, sounds and images contained on his *Love Bomb* CD, this 'video translation' released in Japan on NTSC format represents a clear-eyed, concentrated assault on what William Burroughs once dismissively characterised as "love love love in slip buckets".

Juxtaposing transgender internet porn with the sizing bomb icon indicating that a 'total error' has occurred in an Apple computer, "Welcome

(Time Hees Left Us)" decries the House nation's blithe apathy towards its own contradictions before offering a devastating critique of how we use 'love' as a construct to overlook abuse. This formula is twisted round in 'Between Empathy And Sympathy Is Time (Apartheid)' in which exhortations to armed revolutionary struggle originally broadcast on Radio Freedom — "Voice of the African National Congress and the Peoples Army" — are modulated through Minnie Riperton's "Lovin' You", thereby also recalling how the vocoder was developed by Alan Turing during World War Two as a means of rendering strategic communications between Allied commanders unintelligible to the enemy. A companion piece, "No No Babylon (Between Empathy And Sympathy Is Time)", uses a constantly repeated shot of cartoon character Tetsuwan Atom, otherwise known as the West as Astro Boy, who barely manages to crawl across the floor while worn and ancient voices talk of sufferings and holocaust.

Elsewhere domestic violence is equated with cultural imperialism, the violent flow of bodily fluids with expressions of homophobia, and linguistic declarations with an account of the lynching of three black men by a racist mob in Thaemlitz's home town, Springfield, Missouri on Good Friday 1906. Abrupt shifts from actual to figurative act as a stem connect in which relative values can no longer be so cheerily conflated with absolutes. After all, if Burroughs's final journal entry is anything to go by, the last word he ever wrote on this earth was 'love'. □

## Go To:



Don't let the Suzanne Vega picture on the front cover put you off. *American Mavericks* ([www.musichaven.co.uk](http://www.musichaven.co.uk)) is the kind of archive site the Net was (or at least should have been) invented for. It's a granarian treasure, holding all manner of excellent interactive, audible, visible and written content related to avant garde American composers and their music. The *Foratunes* section contains interactive elements. An online version of the 'Rhythmicom', a keyboard built in 1931 by Léon Theremin at the request of composer/theorist Henry Cowell, might take a while to download but is worth the trouble. Each key of the Rhythmicom played a repeated tone,

proportional in pitch and rhythm to the overtone series. "The Unmixed Question", another interactive feature, lets you enter Charles Ives's head, adapting strategies used in his 1906 piece *The Unanswered Question*. A rich section on Harry Partch lets you play virtual Partch instruments, listen to him explain each of them, and hear musical examples. Beside the interactive segments, there are films: Margaret Long Ten performing John Cage's 433" on her toy piano, a clip from the 1923 French film *Cinéma-musique* (filmed at a George Antheil concert), Alison Knowles showing off her newly made instrument (handmade paper filled with beans)

and Annie Gosfield's fantasy about out-of-whack mechanical instruments. The last section is brimming with essays (by music critic and author Kyle Gass) and interviews with the likes of Lou Harrison, Pauline Oliveros, La Monte Young, Marian Zazezla, Steve Reich and so many others. And as if that's not enough, the Listening Room section overflows with music and taped interviews by pioneers such as Morton Subotnick, Milton Babbitt, Charles Amirkhanian, Robert Ashley, Harold Budd, Allen Curnan, Kenneth Gaburo, Frederic Rzewski, Meredith Monk, Terry Riley and a whole lot more.

ANNE HILDE NEST

# The Inner Sleeve

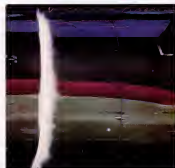
Artwork selected this month by Alan Licht

## Wings: *Wings Over America* (Capitol 3xLP) 1977 (Inner gatefold painting by Jeff Cummins)

I like too much album cover art to pick a favourite, but this is undoubtedly the most significant to me, because it's what made me want to play guitar. This inner sleeve is a painting of Wings onstage during their 1976 American tour. I first saw it in 1978 in the kids' magazine *Bananas*, where they were running some contest that gave away copies of the album. Jenny McCulloch is standing there in a white vest with a Gibson SG, Danny Laine with a double-neck SG, Linda McCartney is behind her keyboard with her hands clapping above her head, Paul McCartney is seated

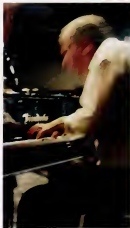
with an Ovation acoustic singing into a microphone, Joe English is behind the drums, eyes closed. Looming above them is a triangular, tunnel-like light projection (which I was reminded of when I saw films by Liz Rhodes and Anthony McCall in the expanded cinema programme of Mark Webber's London Film Co-op exhibition recently), and each of them is coloured by the house lighting (McCulloch maroon, Laine and English purple/blue, the McCartneys yellow). You could also see tiny figures silhouetted in the aisles of the arena, taking it all in. As a kid I liked music, and art, and going

to the theatre, and films – this picture seemed to say that a rock concert would combine all of that into one thing, on one stage. I knew immediately I wanted to be part of the spectacle, both as a participant and an observer, as much as possible. One of my cousins owned *Wings Over America*, which he taped for me (ultimately I bought the album). I made a two dimensional guitar, modelled after the one McCartney was playing, out of cardboard and string. My mother got the drift and signed me up for guitar lessons. □ Alan Licht is a musician, writer and Wire contributor



# On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh





## KONFRONTATIONEN 2003 NICKELSDORF

AUSTRIA

BY BRUCE CARNEVALE

Lying five kilometres from the Hungarian border and a good 60km south east of Vienna, the Austrian village of Nickelsdorf (population 1500) is not the most lively host for an annual free jazz and electronic improv festival, which has been running since 1979. The event takes place on a stage beneath the computed to roof behind the Jaxx Galerie restaurant owned by curator Hans Folt. The audience, meanwhile, park themselves on chairs arranged cinema-like in rows, under makeshift plastic roofing long occupied by elderberry plants. A banner behind the stage warns spectators against expecting light cocktail jazz, it reads: "Play the music not the background. Let's paint the background." Opening the festival is German/Scandinavian quartet The Electrics, led by German trumpeter Axel Dörner. They begin their long piece sounding

like early Ornette Coleman. Though Dörner never fails to impress, his Scandinavian counterparts can't hold his lead. Stone Etison's tenor squeals pointlessly, while Raymond Strid on drums comes across somewhat uncommitted.

Peter Brötzmann's Chicago Tenet plays Saturday and Sunday evening, opening their weekend stint with a formal, even mechanical composition wrapping solo after solo from its needs section — Ken Vandermark, Mats Gustafsson, Mars Williams — around staccato group improvisations. Fester, harder, louder is the motto driving them on; the outcome is just plain firing. The Sunday gig is something else entirely. The last of three pieces, heavily improvised, hits a shuddering groove formed out of a Ken Vandermark solo, which is picked up and then retched up a few years by bassist Kent Kessler and drummers Harold Drake and Michael Zerang. Large-scale improv at its best.

Folt does out two wild cards — one a piece to Ken Vandermark and Joe McPhee — allowing each to assemble his own ensemble from the musicians present. Both assemble quartets, three of whom are Brötzmanns. Safe enough bet, to be sure. Vandermark fans best with his

chosen team of Brötzmann plus drummers Drake and Paul Lovens. Brötzmann tempers Vandermark's energy, forcing the younger reedist to carefully define himself. The way the music gains form without losing intensity marks one of Brötzmann's great contributions to free music.

A quartet called Priestest Don Tap/Exit The Day, comprising Annette Krebs (guitar, electronic devices), Andrea Neumann (inside piano, electronics), Christof Kuzmann (GS) and Burkhard Stangl (electric and acoustic guitars) plays a set that's hardly this match of the free jazz frenzy of Brötz and co, yet their careful progress sustains fascination through the clarity and positioning of their notes.

Equally stunning is the duo of turntable Phil Jock and Jacob Kirkegaard on laptop. Like the quartet, they break the music into pieces, and when Jock takes apart the solo violin opening JS Bach's "Erbarme Dich" ("Have Mercy, Lord, On Me", from the St Matthew Passion), the music attains its ardent specificity.

German pianist George Gwara brings a new quartet: Kent Kessler, Michael Vatcher (drums), Tobias Debus (tenor saxophone) and Selt Transmorta (trombone). After a stiff opening,

they hit their stride and eventually take off, with Gwara's light flares punctuated and driven by Kessler and Vatcher. Finally, Debus's swagging sax finds its place as the group slam down on the accelerator. Thrilling.

Taking in Dörner's Highlow alongside the free jazz, the weekend's musical mix keeps the festival jumping. But the outstanding set belongs to the Norwegian laptop duo Fe-mail, comprising May Ratkje and Hild Sofie Tjørhov, who also perform a day later with dancer Lotta Mehn. Mats Gustafsson's live, in an old farm estate that has been transformed into an artist's centre near Nickelsdorf. Both sets achieve an extraordinary balance of acoustic and electric forces. Ratkje's T-shirt is emblazoned with "Make Noise Not War", but her slogan is a barely adequate description of Fe-mail's music. Noise it isn't; rather a playful mixture of Ratkje's voice, Tjørhov's French horn and concert/voice samples: a stowaway's voice, gongs, a child's wind-up chime, and something sounding like a Mats Gustafsson solo. Their duo gig lulls in the middle, but they end on a high, with Ratkje hitting a final bloodcurdling scream. □

Clockwise from top left: Philip Jock, Peter Brötzmann, Ken Vandermark Group, Paul Lovens, Maya Ratkje, George Gwara

## TONY CONRAD & CHARLEMAGNE PALESTINE NAPLES CASTEL SANTELMO ITALY

BY CHRIS ROSE

Daddy, this is only the second time this odd couple have played together as a duo in the 35 years that have elapsed since Tony Conrad was attracted by the crazy bell ringing he heard coming from St Martin's Church in New York. He wandered in to be ported in the decision of "Charlie", and, well, a third of a century on they find themselves here, brought together again as part of a large retrospective exhibition about the work of Julian Beck and Judith Malina's Living Theatre organised by the Fondazione Momi at the Castel Sant'Elmo in Naples.

The Living Theatre were a group whose work touched on dance, performance art, poetry and the visual arts, expanding the frontiers and possibilities of theatre in the same way as Jack Smith and Stan Brakhage were doing with film. Fluxus with visual art and La Monte Young's Theater Of Eternal Music and Werho's Exploding

Plastic Inevitable were doing with sound, light and space. Many of these artists participated in the exhibition — La Monte Young was playing piano just down the hallway as Palestine and Conrad turned up. Perhaps fortunately given his strained relationship with Conrad, Young's presence was only on DVD.

Tony Conrad and Charlemagne Palestine together could just as easily go out as a comedy duo, almost — the bulky, childlike, gaudily dressed, Rabaisian Palestine and the polite, understated Mr. gentlemanly, ascetic Conrad. They're a mismatched duo set-up, though it would be difficult to say which one is the straight man. Palestine refuses to perform in the seated auditorium where his piano has been set up. "You see all these artists, they don't show their work in the auditorium — why should I do mine then?" he demands, not without reason, while Conrad nods stonily in agreement. The piano is duly moved into their chosen space, the ambulatory of the 15th century Angevin castle. It's a high, domed hallway at the meeting of four long corridors. The audience are invited to get up

and walk around, to test the sound at different points of the playing area. But everyone sits there reverently, apparently in awe of Palestine, who wields in, glass of cognac in hand, circling the room, cooking his head to one side like a curious dog, testing the long, high pierced note the piece begins with, or possibly just in awe of the sound itself. Palestine shuffles off, adjusts the drone and comes back, eventually nods happily to himself and sits down at his piano modestly decorated with a mere half dozen or so cuddly toys. The two men hardly look at each other as Conrad, with an extremely simple set-up of single violin, rock 'n' roll amp and a few effects, escapes into a first long note, which booms off and slides along Palestine's drone. Palestine has the piano, the left hand building up a cloud of sound, slithering with nervous energy as he pumps the sustain pedal.

The immense, growling drone they create builds a sense of anticipation as they slowly add additional layers of sound like it's leading to something. But after the 20 minute point anticipation shifts into understanding that this is

it. The sound's not about to head anywhere; rather, it forms a spreading cloud overhead, sucking listeners up and pinning them into the moment itself. The drones aren't static but constantly moving, rushing — the effect like baling in the middle of a readily flowing river, clinging to a rock for dear life. The visceral bass drone and the occasionally discordant violin build up a dynamic excitement that is far deeper to primal rock than the New Music programmes into which these two are often inserted.

45 minutes in and Palestine throws in some delicious ripples, right hand stepping up the keyboard, and starts barking and growling madly away waving his fist at Conrad. Conrad merely smiles back politely until after an hour Palestine abruptly stands and picks up a stuffed dog which says "Whee! Woof!" and takes the show for him. Conrad, meanwhile, declares the piece to Elenora Fonseca De Pimental, who led a failed revolution in Naples in 1799. Palestine offers his bottle of cognac to anyone who'd like a drip, but it isn't necessary. The intoxicated crowd has already been won over. □

## JOHN ZORN'S ELECTRIC MASADA GENT BULOKESTIE BELGIUM

BY MARTIN LONGLEY

Zorn's Electric Masada were playing in London the night after this gig. But, perversely, I found myself in Belgium, attending Gent's ambitiously programmed Blue Note Festival. The fact that the Bulokestie's massive marquee is rented almost to capacity is a testament given the foregoing free entertainment to be found outside, as the Blue Note runs parallel to the main Gentse Feesten, Europe's largest street celebration.

Unlike most UK festivals, instead of clinking wobbly plastic beer beakers, we were allowed to cradle our Belgian beer glasses, sitting amongst trees that had been thoughtfully incorporated

into the tent area. The festival's foundation was laid 11 years ago, when its director Bertrand Riemann was working his Den Turk bar. He sold that place to finance the event's expansion, and has been working in tandem with Blue Note Records for the last two years.

I hadn't seen John Zorn in action since the turn of the 1990s, when he was proudly mugged. It's disappointing to have missed his whole longhair period, as Zorn appeared here short once more, close cropped and angry. As soon as he springs out of the traps, he's immediately over stage left, waving his arms about like there's a fire as he yells down into the photographers' pit. Something's not right for him, but eventually he takes up his stool, his back to the audience as he faces down his current line-up of Masada: Marc Ribot (guitar), Jerry Salt (keyboards), Trevor Dunn (bass), Cyro Baptista (percussion)

and Kenny Wollesen (drums).

Apparently the seemingly camera-shy Zorn hadn't counted on the rock stadium-style video team that captures the sextet from every angle, zooming in to their sweaty exertions, and projecting them straight onto the massive screens flanking each side of the stage. Contrary to his angry entrance, we can see that for much of the gig he's smiling. That is, when he also isn't stuffed between his lips, spit spraying out in clouds as he duck-chuckles at high speed, then wrangles into a lyrical sequence, playing smooth before suddenly jacking back into burned hyperactivity. It's extremely taxing to catch so much slogging time from the leader, but this is also a privy with a democratic disposition, allowing ample time for each member's intense outbursts. It's immediately evident that their rapport is

completely hotwired, and the audience are essentially witnessing a private communion. Ribot's looking over at Zorn as he raises another angular solo, travelling back to the crackling source of his sound in contrast to the smoothness of his recent work with Peruvian singer Susana Baca. Salt's on Hammond for most of the duration, confirming the line he's been developing with Dave Douglas's electrified group.

It's curious to hear Zorn's traditional Jewish melodies passing through a 1950s boogie filter. It's even more exciting when Electric Masada break out into Naked City style headbanging. Everything's just right, as they rapidly withdraw from a position of extreme intensity towards melodic deliriums. Zorn's group appear to be utterly self-absorbed, yet the music draws the crowd deep into its circle of intensity. □

## LIQUID ARCHITECTURE/ BERNARD PARMEGIANI ROYAL MELBOURNE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY/AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR THE MOVING IMAGE

AUSTRALIA  
BY ANDREW HAMILTON

It's clear from Liquid Architecture 4 that post-techno sound art is big in Australia. Custed by Melbourne artists Mat Bates and Bruce Lee, and supported by the Media Arts department at RMIT, events were concentrated in the city with some held interstate. The most important guest was GRM composer Bernard Parmegiani, paying a return visit. Pierre Henry might be the father of techno, but Parmegiani is the stronger inspiration for younger Australian sound artists. His concert at RMIT's Storey Hall featured what he called "an orchestra of loudspeakers", with the composer at a mixing desk in the middle of the auditorium. It turned out to be an eerie but involving experience — like all concerts of purely electronic music, it's a "soundfield" that relies on live performance, the 40 speakers like inanimate instrumentalists placed round the auditorium. Parmegiani's mixing didn't really take advantage of the channels or offer, offering a proscenium event with an essentially stereophonic soundstage. But the results were still vivid and compelling and showed that he really is one of the founders of the genre. The compositions featured were *La Rue Fovis* (The Fovis Wheel, 1971), *Entre Lignes* (Between Time, 1992), *Dehors/Dedors* (Inside/Outside, 1977), and *Espace D'Espace* (Space Of Space, 2002).

Speaking through a translator at the Australian Centre for the Moving Image in the superb new Federation Square arts complex, Parmegiani talked of the contrast between concrete and abstract music. He preferred the label "acoustic" to "musique concrète", he said, and the GRM composers were committed to "acoustic listening", which ignored the source in order to concentrate on the sound itself. Pythagoras lectured to his students, the akouastikoi, from behind a screen so they wouldn't be distracted by his appearance. This is "listening without seeing", as Parmegiani put it, adding, "to analyse the sound we have to forget the source, whether it be a note on the piano, the wind, or the roar of a lion". In a piano concerto "we never question the sound produced by the piano — it's a habitual medium, likewise the orchestra... We forget the cause because we know it by heart," he argued. With acoustic music, in contrast, "it's hard to find the 'musical' (sonic) taste bud." He also commented that sampling was not effective because "it's too easy to compose a piece that's strange but not musical".

But there's a paradox at the heart of this music. The GRM composers can't resist telling us where their abstract sounds came from — Parmegiani's illustration was denied, he told us, from a recording of a pingpong ball. In fact he argues that all music is acoustic, and only modern concrete tries so that most, even though Parmegiani claims that you "have to forget the source, whether it's [Pierre] Schaeffer's music or mine!" The crucial difference is that in traditional music you know what the instruments are, with musique

concrète there's no alternative to acoustic listening.

The festival began with performances by San Francisco's Infrahound, plus Australian guests, in an underground looking bay at RMIT. Infrahound are Scott Arford and Randy Yau. Yau has been active as sound artist and designer for the last decade, and the Infrahound project, with members on electronics, generates rumbling rumbles below the level of audibility that have a physical effect on the body. I was expecting some kind of visceral disturbance, probably in the lower region, but it was only towards the end of the performance that this thing reviewer felt any discomfort. Maybe the venue was too cautious to let the full impact of Infrahound's psychosomatic intensity. The effects were dramatic, although from a GRM viewpoint, I'd say that Infrahound offered material for a composition rather than a composition itself. But then they'd respond that they aren't interested in musical composition at all. Yau's solo set, which generated feedback from screaming into the mic, was if anything more compelling.

Mat Bates's duo Machine Xas Rock — "rock music by people who have never heard rock music!" — had ecclesiastical *Wendy* contributor Philip Baskby dropping at the last minute on drums, so some tentativeness was to be expected. Phil Samartzos on CD players and synthesizers, with Lawrence English on laptop and turntables, produced a compelling performance of subtle noise variations. Infrahound's approach contrasted with the more musical strategies of young Melbourne composers Anthony Patinos, with regular partner Robin Fox on laptop in an explosive, fusing display at the BUS Gallery, an event in Rydges Atrium's F-Hall Festival, which

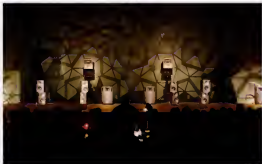
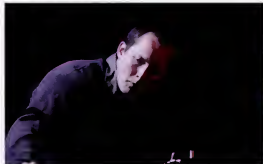
coincided with Liquid Architecture.

Audio-visual events included Cedric Belfrage's rather mild collection *Highlights* were Sally Galsing and Pa Bar's *Scroaches*, *Sketch*, *Salt/The Bloodless Legs/The Sleepless Nights*, a bravura display of surrealism in two parts. With an overlay of dust and scratches, a woman gets caught up in a table, then a protagonist of uncertain gender narrows through a psychic maze populated by playfully disturbed paramecia and penguins.

The film was created by Jean-Louis (feedback, concrete sound) and Julien Blum (violin). Less disturbing and totally hilarious was the offering from Coda — Kirsten Badley and Nick Ritz, with James Wilkinson on trombone — in which a scene of beads moving round a garage segued into a pop meditation by singing animal toys, the mic held by a human hand.

The following afternoon's screening of audiovisual compositions by GRM composers, curated by Jim Kinn, was tantalising. *Jeux D'Artifices* (Artifice's Games, 1979) and *L'Ecran Transparent* (The Transparent Screen, 1973) were entirely the work of Parmegiani. But the most delightful was an animation by obscure Polish director Piotr Kamiler from 1970, with music by Parmegiani. Kamiler produced 15 abstract films and animations paired with electronic soundtracks by GRM composers, and *Labyrinthe* is a haunting encounter, a perfect marriage of sound and animation — the highlight of a well-conceived programme. □ For more info on Liquid Architecture, go to [www.liquidarchitecture.org.au](http://www.liquidarchitecture.org.au)

Top: John Zorn's Electric Masada. Bottom: Lawrence English (left) and Bernard Parmegiani at Melbourne's Liquid Architecture Festival





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Sunburned Hand of the Man

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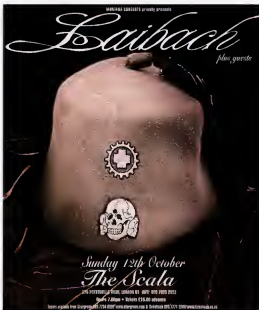
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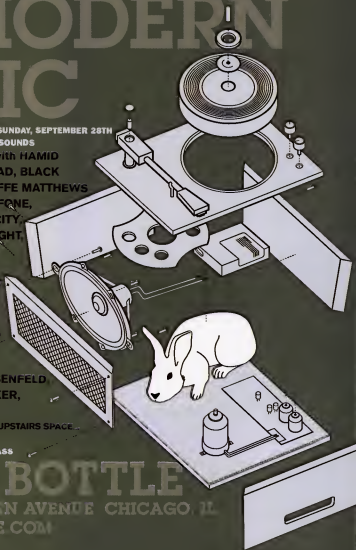
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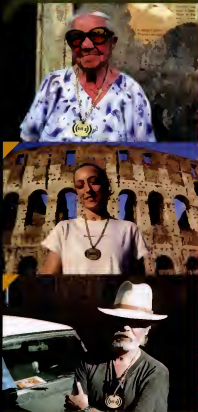
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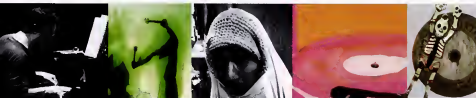


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09.10 . 9pm . Teatro Ariosto  
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14.10 . 9pm . Teatro Ariosto  
**Rosario Giuliani Quartet + Flavio Bolto Quartet**  
18.10 . 9pm . Teatro Ariosto  
**Icarus Ensemble** Berio, Maderna, Nono  
23.24 . 10 . 9pm . Teatro Cavallerizza  
**L'Angelo e il Golem** Scenic-musical variations by Francesco La Licata  
28.10 . 9pm . Teatro Ariosto  
**Louis Scialvis / Napoli's Walls**  
29.30.31.10 . 9pm . Teatro Cavallerizza  
**Compagnia Scimone Sframelli / Nunzio - Bar - La festa**  
04.11 . 9pm . Teatro Cavallerizza  
**I Virtuosi di San Martino** Showcase  
08.11 . 9pm . Teatro Cavallerizza  
**"Preludi a un giorno nuovo"** A tribute to the music of Paolo Castaldi  
11.11 . 9pm . Teatro Ariosto  
**Wayne Horvitz Quartet**  
20.11 . 9pm . Teatro Cavallerizza  
**Boredoms**  
22.11 . 9pm . Teatro Ariosto  
**Zeitkratzer**  
Oehring, Thaemlitz, Ott, Schwartz, Rinaldo, Nono, Cage, Merzbow, Friedl, Glass, O'Rourke, Stockhausen  
24.11 . 6pm . Teatro Valli  
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Bussotti, Feldman  
29.11 . 9pm . Teatro Ariosto  
**Emio Greco | pc** Extra dry  
05.06.12 . 9pm . Teatro Ariosto  
**Compagnia Aterballetto** Italo Calvino Project  
10.11.12 . 9pm . Teatro Cavallerizza  
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Otomo Yoshihide at the LMC Festival; Kim Moorhead and (opposite page) Susan O'Dell at Adventures in Modern Music

## UK Festivals

### FREEDOM HIGHWAY: SONGS THAT SHAPED A CENTURY

**LONDON**  
The Barbican Centre celebrates music as a call for social change with a series of six concerts, films and discussions. The Watson Family (19 September, Barbican Hall), journalist Helen Dowling interviews Joan Jans, widow of murdered African singer/songwriter Victor Jans (19, 5.30pm, Barbican Centre); Argentina's Mercedes Sosa and Victor Heredia, and Chile's Angel Parra sing ballads of the Nuevo Cancion Movement (20, Barbican Hall); folk singer Jane Tabor, with Huw Warren and Philip King (21, 5.30pm, St Giles Cripplegate); Frank Hart and Donal Lunny (21, 3pm, Garden Room); writer/broadcaster Eamon McCormack discusses music and politics with journalist Sean O'Hagan (21, 5.30pm, Garden Room); US singer/songwriter Steve Earle, Dick Gaughan, Karen Casey (21, 5.30pm, Barbican Hall); Cameroon saxophonist Manu Dibango joins forces with Sweets String Quartet (22, 7.30pm, LSO St Luke's); London Barbican Centre, 19-22 September, various times and prices, 020 7638 8891 [www.barbican.org.uk](http://www.barbican.org.uk)

### LADYFEST MANCHESTER

The great power festival springs up in a new four day incarnation in Manchester. Appearing are Lits Tribe B and Hamburg's Benzodette La Heigst, plus regional acts Lolita Storm, Girls On Top and Gertrude; and local acts Veleite, Moske,

Zee Pretties, Red Vinyl Fur and Flemings 50. The festival also boasts the largest exhibition of women's comic art in the UK, workshops about forming a group, DJing, drumming and self-defence, films, stalls, discussion panels and club nights, and a first night mix of comedy, spoken word and theatre. Boys welcome. Manchester Zoo Arts, 4-7 September, [www.ladyfestmanchester.org](http://www.ladyfestmanchester.org)

### LMC'S 12TH ANNUAL FESTIVAL

**UK-THE WORLD**  
London Musicians' Collective give AMM guitarist Keith Rowe and Japanese new music scenester Otomo Yoshihide carte blanche to create a city-wide festival drawing on the resources (musicians, comedians, visual artists) and infrastructure of the LMC. Events include a live audio link to Rowe's Mimeo performance at the Serpentine, Hyde Park on 5 September, and daytime, evening and weekend events still to be announced. All events will be broadcast and webcast live on Resonance 104.4 FM London The Place, 5-7 September, £10-£5 per evening, £25-£12 season tickets, 020 7367 0161, [www.lmc-uk.org.uk](http://www.lmc-uk.org.uk), [www.resonancefm.com](http://www.resonancefm.com)

## International festivals

### AZKENA ROCK FESTIVAL

**SPAIN**  
Rock festival in the Basque country. Iggy & The Stooges, The Cramps, Teenage Fanclub, Jesse

Malin Band, The Hospitals, The Jayhawks, The Soundtrack of Our Lives, Penikis, Hermans, The Hellacopters, The Dictators, The Cherry Valence, Fireballs of Freedom and many more. Bibao Mendizorona Pavillon, 0034 94 4154997, [www.azkenarockfestival.com](http://www.azkenarockfestival.com)

### BIENNALE BERN

**SWITZERLAND**  
Large-scale festival including Peter Brinmann's Chicago Tumbler, Janet Cardiff's 4D Part Motel installation, Zeitkuster with Lee Ranaldo performing works by Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Rinaldo, Jim D'Onofrio and others, Janek Scholer turntable sets; Vinko Globokar; plus works by Iannis Xenakis, György Ligeti, Arvo Pärt, Giancarlo Scialò, Helmut Lachenmann and Edgard Varèse. Bern Areal der Hochschule der Künste, 4-14 September, 0041 31 634 9355, [www.biennale-bern.ch](http://www.biennale-bern.ch)

### BITZ FESTIVAL

**ITALY**  
Weekend HipHop and dance music festival put together by the Dedbeat team from the UK and party organisers Surphase from Italy. Daytime events will be held inside the ancient aqueduct system in Rome's city centre, while evening sessions take place in the Le Cirque conference centre. Line up includes Jiggy Brothers, Carnival De Mike Jadró, Q.Bert, Bounty Killer, Blackalicious, U-2, Mum, Noe Pascale, Diplo, Alex Knight, Trevor Jackson, Flad, Reg, Boom Bip, Sage Francis, Freeform, Gescom and D'Archangelio. Label showcases from Rophex Records, Quantum, Warp, Lex, Fat Cat, Planet

Mu, Output, Clone, Skam and Underground Resistance. Rome Circolo degli Artisti & Le Cirque, 26-28 September, 75 euros, [www.bitiz.it](http://www.bitiz.it)

### DESTUL/FREEDOM FROM FESTIVAL

**USA**  
Free folk, improvisation and out-rock festival featuring Jim O'Rourke, Jackie D Mothelicket, Devendra Banhart, Rev. Dwight Froust's Black Cock Reveal, Corsons/Fishery/Moore, Kevin Drummer & Tom Smith, No Neck Blues Band, Tony Conrad, Enka Elder & Matthew Valentine, Eme Beaulieu, Neil Michael Hagerty, Nippergh, Smeigra, Furaxo, Jack Rose and others. Minneapolis, Finland, 4-5 October, 2pm-2am, \$15 per day, or \$25 for the weekend, 001 612 338 8100, [www.fineinmusic.com](http://www.fineinmusic.com)

### DISSONANZE FESTIVAL

**ITALY**  
Series of performances and symposia celebrating electronic music and the digital arts. Grand opening featuring Richie Hawtin and others (26 September); cinematographer Enzo Casini and To Rococo Rot's revisit adolescence in a multimedia performance (30); digital arts symposia and performances (1, 2 October); Nordic special featuring Goodpaw, Opote, Antone Makris and Kim Henley (3); a series of improvisations created by Mattias including Move on Mars, People Use Us, Lesser and Keith Fullerton Whitman (3); second Nordic special with Aig, Mikael Stavastand, Andreas Tillander and Vasilakis Delay (4); and a closing dance party with Radeactive Man, Andrew Westhrell, Soft Pink Truth, Miss Kitta and Addictive TV.



Rome various venues, times & prices, 26 September-4 October, [www.discosnanae.it](http://www.discosnanae.it)

#### HIGH ZEE FESTIVAL USA

Baltimore's annual improvisation festival celebrates its fifth anniversary with 20 live sets, sound installations, workshops and street performances. The four day festival will feature various configurations drawn from an international pool of 30 musicians including multi-instrumentalist John Berendt, percussionists Michael Zerang and Michael Evans, saxophonist Michel Condesa, self-designed instrument player Paolo Angeli, violinist Karl Hernandez, guitarist Ron Anderson, Baltimore Theatre Project, 4-7 September, 8:30-midnight and 1-4pm on Saturday, \$12 per concert, \$45 festival pass, 001 410 752 8558, [www.theatreproject.org](http://www.theatreproject.org)

#### NO MUSIC FESTIVAL CANADA

Veteran darlings The Tishitt Spasm Band, present their annual noseless in their hometown of London, Ontario. This year's participants include Japan's Hiyokidan and Incapachans, Gary Hill & Michael Snow, Paul McCarthy & Nobuo Kubota, plus relative youngsters Sam Sharkey, Wolf Eyes and Black Ooze. London Forest City Gallery and Anishan Hall, 25-27 September, 001 519 434 5875, [www3.sympatico.ca/patton/NSB](http://www3.sympatico.ca/patton/NSB)

#### OPENING ACTS FRANCE

This month The Wire is co-sponsoring the first week of the new season at Paris's Instant

Chévrin, and the first in a series of ongoing co-promotions between the venue and the magazine. Opening Acts runs for six nights with a line up that includes Jérôme Nothomb with Erik M. Zbigniew Markowski, The Sealed Knot, Mattin, and a performance of Cornelius Cardew's *Tessie* by a group including Axel Dörmér and Andrea Naumann. Paris instant Chévrin, 29 September-4 October, [www.instantchevrin.fr/st](http://www.instantchevrin.fr/st)

#### REMIX: STRUCTURES AND IMPROVISATIONS ITALY

Electric pianist Uri Caine has put together the programme for Venice's 47th International Festival of Contemporary Music. It includes Uri Caine Ensemble reworking Verdi's opera *Othello*, Otomo Yoshihide, David Moss's *Wild World*, DJ Olive's *Bla Bla Bla* video and dance project, David Shaw, Amsterdam String Trio, Bang On A Can performing Carlon Nancarrow, Thurston Moore, Annie Gosfield & others, Elliott Sharp's Carban, Don Byron's Music for Six Musicians, Courvoisier/Feldman's Friedlander, Gary Lucas soundtracking Der Golem, Richard Teitelbaum's Zvi for Islamic musicians and Jewish singers, Ethel Quartet playing the music of John Zorn, Henry Threadgill Ensemble, Sam Bennett, Django Bates Human Chain with The Smith Quartet, Hans Koch's Haricorns Chamber Music, Fred Frith, Burch Morris New York Skyavenger and many others. Venice Teatro Piccolo Arsenale & Teatro alla Scala, 12-21 September, various times & prices, 0039 041 2424, [biennale.teatro.it/en/musica/colinda/](http://biennale.teatro.it/en/musica/colinda/)

#### SKA'U ME7S/KLANGWALO/LA FRÉT OES SONS LATVIA

One day International festival featuring abstract digital soundscaping from Mega artists General Magic, Peter Rehberg, Florian Hecker, Tina Frank, plus French electroacoustic Bernard Parmegiani and local acts including powernoise group Enno, industrial noise from Claudrum, indie artists 20T, and more. Riga K26, 13 September, 3pm, 00371 9464264, [visiarts\\_gij@yahoo.com](mailto:visiarts_gij@yahoo.com)

#### STROBOTIKA: ELECTRIC LIGHT, ELECTRIC SOUND BELGIUM

The premier Icelandic music and arts collective, Kitchen Motors, present a diverse weekend of experimental work. Starting on the Friday night with Jóhanna Jóhannsson, Matthias Hermsdóttir and the Helken String Quartet and a screening of the film *Not Alvin*; the event continues on Saturday with music, performances and visuals from The Heilfyrir, Keri Kira & Keru, Styllupósteypt, Aupan directing The Helvins' *Flashlight Symphony for 20 Flashlights And 20 Surveillance Cameras*, and more. Hasselt Kunstenccentrum België, 19-20 September, 10-8 Euros, 0032 11 224141, [users.skynet.be/kunstenccentrumbelgie](mailto:users.skynet.be/kunstenccentrumbelgie)

#### THE WIRE PRESENTS ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC USA

This month Chicago's Empty Bottle venue hosts a major five day festival of new music curated

and programmed by The Wire. The line up includes Ill, Adult, Fred Anderson & Harold Crake, Black Ooze, John Butcher with Kaffe Matthews and Andy Moor, California, Michael Gira, Kim Hestorby, Jackie-O Motherfucker, Lightning Bolt, Pnest, Pulseprogramming, Six Organs Of Admittance, Sun O))), Text Of Light featuring Lee Ranaldo and Alan Licht, Stewart Walker, Wolf Eyes and Zev. The event will also include special events and film screenings. Chicago Empty Bottle, 24-28 September, 5pm, \$15 per night or \$60 festival pass, 001 773 276 3600, [www.emptybottle.com](http://www.emptybottle.com)

## Special Events

#### BOBBING ABOUT ON THE RIVER UK

Club Boat Ting's first annual festival in memory of concrete poet Bob Cobbing. The event has now been skinned down to just one night with The False Face Society, The Maggie Nicols Girl Band, Stop aka Hugh Metcalfe & Varyan Western, Lawrence Upton, Rob Dainoff and many others. London The Trench Club, 29 September, 7pm-midnight, 2bbc, 020 8670 5094, [www.boat-ting.com](http://www.boat-ting.com)

#### HAYWIRE SESSIONS 8TH BIRTHDAY UK

Andy Weatherall and friends' birthday bash featuring Oyster live, plus Weatherall, Cristian Vogel, Seig, FatCat's Alex Knight, Richard Fearless, Radioactive Men, Mori Carter and Rick Hopkins. London Fortress II, 5 September, 11pm-

## Out There

Sam, DB457 444737, www.haywire.co.uk

### ELECTRONIC MUSIC ARCHIVE SWITZERLAND

Exhibition with installations, videos and drawings by Tietjen Aylward, Dren Ambersch, Thomas Ankenstam, Knut Aufemerk, K. Michael Babcock, Ed Bader, Kim Cascone, Tim Catlin, Nicolas Collins, Pascal Dornier, Fear Of God, The Fink, Russell Howell, Florian Hecker, Haze, Institut für Fernstudien, Alan Licht, Keith Rowe, Otomo Yoshitake and more. Plus a portrait exhibition featuring the pictures of his Cohen, Black Doves Aaron Benari, Jan Tietjen, Thelwell, Suckle, Susie Enzka, Hugh Price and others. St. Gallen Kunststube 5 September - 2 November. [www.stgallen.ch/kunststube/](http://www.stgallen.ch/kunststube/)

### THE NIGHT OF THE UNEXPECTED THE NETHERLANDS

Describing itself as "a festival of one night", this is an evening of short performances without an intermission featuring Mouse on Mars, David Toop & Max Eastley, Charlemagne Palestine, Carsten Nicolai, Staatplaat Sound System, Scanner and Elemen. Plus a performance by Yannis Kyriakides for glassplates, electronics and strobes, and a piece for a Walkman-wearing child by Dutch composer Mies Twaalfhoven. Amsterdam Paradiso, 4 September, 10 euros, 0031 20 6947349, [www.guadamas.nl](http://www.guadamas.nl)

### RESONANCE 104.4 FM

#### UO-THO WORLD

New shows for September on UMC's radio station include Steve Douglas's weekly look at English traditional dance, Morris Orders (Tuesdays, 2:00pm), Chris Weaver's celebration of juvenile prodigies and bedroom bands, Down Memory Lane (Wednesdays, 3:30pm), and Nadim Mahjoub's bi-cultural Middle East Panorama (Wednesdays, 4pm). Also watch out for The World's Adventures In Modern Music (Thursdays, 9:00pm), Ego Phram's radio art show Stinky White Glue (Tuesdays, 8:30pm) and Kim Morgan's b3ta Show, a split-off from the b3ta

subertainment website. From 5-7 September each evening is devoted to the UMC Festival (see UK festivals). Broadcasts across central London noon-1am, seven days a week with repeats broadcast outside these times, web streaming and full listings at [www.resonancefm.com](http://www.resonancefm.com)

### LA MONTE YOUNG & MARIAN

#### ZAZZELA GERMANY

Rare opportunity to experience the work of the New York minimalist legends. Young's The Magic Opening Chord with Zazzele's Light Works (Saturdays, 3-6pm) and DVD installation of Young's six and a half hour performance of the Well-Tuned Piano (Sundays, 1-6pm). Polking Kunst im Regenbogenstadl, until the end of October, DO 49 881 417719, [www.regenbogenstadl.de](http://www.regenbogenstadl.de)

## On Stage

### ELIZA CARTHAY

Unaffected English folk. Wester Ross Festival (13-14 September), Guildford Electric Theatre (25), Ipswich The Manor Ballroom (26), Heston Pavilion (27), Wandsworth The Stables (28), Birmingham The Mac (29), Cheltenham Town Hall (30), Cardigan Theatre Muidan (2 October), Aberystwyth Ac (3), Ingleton Folk Festival (4), Sheffield Memorial Hall (5), Wrexham Central Station (7), Worcester Harrington Hall (8), Barry The Mar (8), Derby The Assembly Rooms (11), Aberdeen The Lemon Tree (12), Liverpool The Neptune Theatre (16), Oxford Zodiac (17), London The Borderline (18) and Aconington Town Hall (19)

### THE CRAMPS

The garage rock Munsters are back. Nottingham Rock City (23 September) and London Astoria (26). members.shaw.co.uk/cramps

### DAVIES/MCNULTY/LACEY

Welsh improvising harpist Rhodri Davies joins improvising Dubliners on laptop and

percussion/electronics respectively. Dublin The Printing House, 26 September, 8pm, 10 euros **GERJAST/STEPHENS/HESSION** Two duos for the Norwegian saxophonist with a UK improvising rhythm section. London Kinkor (4 September), Terrace Club, Leeds Adelphi (6). [infoaboutdram.com](http://infoaboutdram.com)

### LONDON IMPROVISERS' ORCHESTRA

Monthly conducted improvisational fun from this stellar musicians pool. London Red Rose Club, 7 September and every first Sunday of the month, 8pm, £5/£3, DO 7263 7265

### GARY LUCAS

Ex-Madrigal Band guitarist with support from Alabama 3's Larry Love and the Reverend D. Wayne Love, London The Spot, 10 September, 8pm, £10, DO 7382 9032 [www.spitz.co.uk](http://www.spitz.co.uk)

### MEGO LABEL NIGHT

A night of abstract digital soundscaping from the renowned Austrian label showcasing four artists: Andreas Preper, Florian Hecker, Russell Howell and Haze of Formers Material. London ICA 28 September, 8pm, £5/£7/£B, DO 7930 3647, [www.ica.org.uk](http://www.ica.org.uk)

### MIMMO

UK First UK performance for the Keith Rowe convened all-star electronic ensemble directed by Kaffe Matthews and featuring Gert Jan Pijns, Christian Fennell, Peter Rehberg, Thomas Lehn, Jérôme Noémie, Rafael Tzuc, Phil Dunnart, Gert Fuhler and Marcus Schmickler. Supported by The Wire. London Septemte, 5 September, 7pm, £5/£3, DO 7000 600100, [www.serpentinegallery.org](http://www.serpentinegallery.org)

### PEACHES

Launch for the seeded up electro-rockers new Fatherfucker album with support from Berlin's Cobra Killer and DJ Johny Slut and Rory Phillips. London The Venue, 18 September, 8pm-1am, £11, DO 7020 7930 2020, [www.venueconcerts.com](http://www.venueconcerts.com)

### SI-CUT-D & PHILIPPE PETIT

Short MicroDub tour for Sprawl Club co-owner

Douglas Benford and French Big Top label artist. London's Sprawl with Tonne (10 September), Newcastle No-Fi with and Cathode (11), Unknown Pleasures at Aberdeen Lemon Tree with Scanner & Bovine Life (12) and Glasgow Miss at 13th Note Café (13). [www.slave.com/sprawl](http://www.slave.com/sprawl)

### DAVID SYLVIAN

The Catford boy with the golden voice returns to London with the release of his new album, Blemish. London Royal Festival Hall, 25 September, £27.50

### LUKE VIBERT

The original Off! House out master. London Wang (6 September), Brighton Beach Club (12), Newcastle Foundation (19), Shatter, Dublin (26), Savoy Theatre, Cork (27), The Vic, Limerick (28)

### M WARD & BETH ORTON

Countryside singer songwriter M Ward tours with Beth Orton. Brixenhead Pacific Road Arts & Exhibition (5 September), Kandel Brewery Arts Centre (6), Leeds City Varieties (7), Oxford Town Hall (8), London Union Chapel (11)

### MARK WASTELL & TAKU UNAMI

A short tour from the London-Tokyo duo of reductionist school improvisors on amplified textures and computer/amped speakers respectively. Liverpool Bluecoat Arts Centre, (2 September), Leeds The Adelphi with Graham Halliwell (5), London Sound 323 by invitation only (6), Sound Art 2 at Norwich The King Of Hearts with Rhodri Davies, Matt Davis and Graham Halliwell (7) and London The Boringham Centre (8). [www.sound323.com](http://www.sound323.com)

## Club spaces

### A CHILD'S MOUNTAIN

This month's theme for the Bohman brothers' improv & more weekly. Percussionist Hants Eivensstad from California plus Dave Ryan, John Edwards and John Bisset/Burhead Ryan (1 September); reductionist evening with Taku

# UK Radio

## National

### 6.30 RADFM 100.5 FM

#### JOHN PEEL

Peel's Radio 100.5 FM

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### ANDY KERSHAW

Andy Kershaw's Radio 100.5 FM

### JAZZ ON 3

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## SNAPSHOT FROM PARIS

Paris is the new epicentre of an exciting live music scene. This exhilarating tour captures the next wave of Afro-beat DJs, French chanson, electronica and left bank jazz, featuring **Steve Argüelles**, **Benoît Delbecq**, **OJ Frédéric Galliano** and Guinean singer **Hadja Kouyaté** from the Plush and Frikiyiwa labels, plus chanson star **Katerine** and other special guests.

MON 27 OCT **LONDON** Queen Elizabeth Hall  
020 7960 4242

**TUE 28 OCT LEEDS Wardrobe**  
0113 245 5570

WED 29 OCT **NOTTINGHAM** Lakeside Art Centre  
0115 846 7777

THU 30 OCT **BRACKNELL** South Hill Park Arts Centre  
01344 484123

**SAT 01 NOV LIVERPOOL** Unity Theatre  
0151 709 4988

SUN 02 NOV BIRMINGHAM MAC  
0121 440 3838

[www.cnnatours.org.uk](http://www.cnnatours.org.uk)

[illegible]

**Friday 14 - Sunday 23 November**

### Highlights include

**E.S.T. + Katie Lebeque Band**

The jazz trio of the moment: "Just what our world had a vision of what it can be". *New York Times*

Friday 14 November PURCELL ROOM  
**FREDERIC RZEWSKI**

Pienist and composer Rzewski throws down a challenge to the orthodoxy of contemporary music and fuels the tension between inspiration and competition.

Saturday 15 November QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL,  
**CHRIS O'RILEY** - *True Love Waits*

Flanigan O'Leary gives material by Godhead a twist - "with unblinking virtuosity he captures the band's signature contradiction, revealing their threats and distortions", *Rolling Stone*.

Saturday 15 November PURCELL ROOM  
**SHORTER STORIES**

Pianist Robert Mitchell and vocalist Nanna Winstens lead crackling hard playing arrangements of classic material by Wayne Shorter.

Sunday 16 November QUEEN ELIZABETH HALL  
**RABIH ABOU-KHALIL SEXTET**  
+ Dreech Quartet & Kelmen Belogh

Witty and inventive real player leads blend along hot staccato Middle Eastern rhythms and jazz strains seamlessly "in a sophisticated and confident as an old New Orleans band". - *Garrett*

Monday 17 November PURCELL ROOM  
**WAYNE HORVITZ & ROBIN HOLCOMB**

**Sweeter Than The Day**  
Beautiful compositions with "strong melodic hooks but constantly winking small surprises. An irresistible antidote to gray days". The Wire.

Tuesday 18 November ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL  
**MATTHEW HERBERT BIG BAND**  
 + Gilee Peterson, Two Banks Of Four, Bembe Segue

Electronics auteur Harbert uses his low-fi, loose-limbed experimental dance music background to give the big band tradition a radical edge.

Tuesday 18 November PURCELL ROOM  
**TERJE ISUNGSET** + Arve Henriksen

A true musical alchemist whose 'instruments' include wood, boulders and ice, plus Nasir Khan whose musical mixture of voice, trumpet and electronics is inspired by Japanese traditions.

Thursday 20 November PURCELL ROOM  
**JASON REBELLO & JOHN LAW**  
+ Enrico Pierunzi

A feast of keyboard talent - two great pianists at two pianos, plus leading Italian guitar and composer, Piersanti.

For a FREE Festival brochure published mid September detailing all events call the BBC Radio 3 Information Line - 08 700 100 300

BOOKINGS - 020 7960 4242 / [www.rn-ny.com](http://www.rn-ny.com)

FOR FURTHER DETAILS - [www.serious.org.uk](http://www.serious.org.uk)



## Out There

Unam & Mark Westall plus Matt Davis, Graham Halliwell (8), Docet Pango, The Poly Shag Kung Bee, Michelle Grande and Nasse Fiamenco (13); BJ Cole/Ermie Butts plus Roland Ransman/Marco Matthei/Simon H Felly/Mark Sanders (15); Oki & Neil Robinson, Adam Schuman and Incurved Win Queen (22). London The Basement Cafe, Mondays, 8pm sharp, £4/£3, 01932 571323

### ANTI-APATHY

Emerging mix of politics and music with star player Balaji Shrivastav, DJ Capricefina, documentary maker Sean Langham, Jubilee 2000 founder Ann Pettifor, satirical monologues from author Sophie Woolley and DJ METER. The evening's theme is global finance and debt. London Lock 17 Camden Lock, 3 September, 7pm, £7-£9, info@antiapathy.org, www.antiapathy.org

### THE BLACK POODLE AT TATE BRITAIN

The Black Poodle and friends take over Tate gallery for three hours of electroacoustic soundscapes, rhythmic structures and visuals. Tate Britain, 19 September, 6-9pm, free, 07867 8000, www.newtoy.org

### BREASTKIN BREAD

Breastkink, funk and hip-hop material featuring Newcastle City Jam, Children Of The Monkey Basket, Foundation, Similes, Imperial Steps, Funk And Disorderly, Four Chancers, Force 10, Boom To Rock and Second To None plus resident Breakin' Bread and Ish FM DJs. London The Rhythm Factory, 27 September, 9pm-4am, £5 before 10.30pm, £8/£5 after, 07867 547 008, www.breastkinkbread.org

### CITYTESC

A monthly electronics and more club at a new venue with a Support Resonance 104.4 FM Special featuring Stencil live accompanied by Frank Fenwick's films, Resonance DJs Jim and Magz, XFM's Nick Lascombe and residents Nite and Mikeas. London Lithhouse, 10 September, 8.30pm-midnight, £3, 020 7251 8787, citytesc@icorral.com, www.lithhouse.co.uk

### CUBE MICROPLEX

Music events at Bristol's old cinema space this month include a night headed by London's improvised music and auto performance club, The Klinker, presenting sound/post Mike Waller, Metacritic's Memorial Magazines featuring Hugh Metcalfe, Mick Beck and Alan Durant, Memez Strong, Laura Lee and Lady Lucy. Bristol Cube, 13 September, 8pm, 0117 907 4190, www.cubecinema.com

### 818

Two events this month from the live event electronics collective. Alongside the group's regular night (18 September, London 46 Dorset Road SE8, see), here's a collaboration with the Uppside team for an evening of experimental film & music, laptop performances and psychotronics (26, London 291 Gellery, £3), 7.30pm-midnight, www.818.co.uk

### FRAKTURE

Immersed music night with Russian guests Oleg Kirgyn and Maleski. Liverpool Bluecoat Arts Centre, 19 September, 7.30-9pm, free, 0151 709 5297, www.bluecoatartscentre.com, www.frakture.freemove.co.uk

### FREE RADICALS

Improvisation material featuring Canadian-born drummer Hans Eismann in a quintet with violinist Philip Wachsmann, saxophonist John Butler, trombonist Paul Rutherford and double

bass player Tony Wain. London Red Rose, 3 September, 8.30pm, £5, 020 7923 4029

### GLOBAL HEADFUNK

Exotic funk-fueled global beats mixing Bengali bhangra, African rare groove, French medieval ragga and Brecken from 'n' boss from residents Nelson Diction, Tim Wilkins, Sammie Rupal and Spindly. London Herbat, 10 September and every second Wednesday of the month, £2.50/£2 or free below 10pm, 020 7613 4462, www.herbatlondon.com

### HYBRIDITY

DI Frankfurt presents a mix of North African and Middle Eastern beats, from Italian distaste, logi/beat and Moroccan dar to Algerian rap, alongside other beats and sounds in this informal bar/call. London Cole 1001, 23 September and every fourth Tuesday of every month, 6-10pm, free, 020 7247 9679, dj@liffresoul.com

### KLINKER

Twice-weekly improvised music and off the wall performance club, Californian percussionist Hans Janssen plus Ghieson sound post, Martin Gubbins (2 September), Swiss violinist Charlotte Hug with Christian Wulf plus Norwegian saxophonist Frode Gjerstad in trio with Paul Hesson and Nick Stephens (4); Ben Out 'n' Lunch/Watson and Metacritic's Memorial Magazines featuring Mick Beck and Alan Durant (9); Voltage trio with Hugh Metcalfe (11); Naked Sunday (16); Menzies Deschamps (18); Naved Woods (18); Estrada Sereine (23); Lou Bentley (26), Nick Prozel and friends (28); London Susses, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9pm, £5/£2, 020 8806 8216

### MIDRANGE

Comix Records presents an evening of drones, digital and fractured rhythms with guest DJs Ministry Of Loud, Bausine & Colin Bradley, a live decks and laptop session from Feed KJ plus images and experimental film by MAX, Brown Swans & GL. London The Foundry, 26 September, 7pm, free/contribs, 020 7739 6900, www.comixrecords.com

### MISO

Monthly night for new electronics with Mr Pochoda, Dave Olson and Adam Johnson plus DJ O Acorn and Kid West (6 September), Glasgow 13th Note Café, 0141 551 1638, www.13thnote.co.uk, www.deepburr.com

### MYBROKENEASEL

Rare live performance by Small Rods aka sampling maestro Matt Ward (ex-Stock, Hausen & Walsman) and Madisons Over Yorkshire plus DJ sets from Freedom and club residents. 30 August, London Public Life, 7pm-late, £3, 020 7375 2425, www.mybrokenease.com

### RED ALERT

Three hour set of fucked-up beats and breaks from Scratch Pervert First Rate plus DJ Organic Audio; updates: Future Records (2); Youngie and Doudu: Malicious from Paris. London Herbat, 5 September, 8-9pm, £4 below 10, £6 after, 020 7613 4462, www.herbatlondon.com

### RETURN TO NEW YORK

The occasional rockabilly evening club night returns this month with a fashion night featuring Coldie T. Rausschmewig, Jay Kravitz live and DJ sets from Dave Clarke, Arthur Baker, Fox Kahane, Princess Superstar, Sean McKesky, Queens Of Noise and others. Kittenhalls essential. London The Great Eastern Hotel, 20 September, 8-2.30am, £18/20, 0207 6185042

### SPIRIT OF GRAVITY

CD launch for Planet Mu artists Urban Myth plus

balloon modelling & DJ action from Chevron and karaoke from Shintai plus resident DJs Brighton The Presbut, 23 September, 8.30pm, £3/£2, 01273 603974, www.spiritofgravity.com

### SPRAWL

The monthly club for diverse digital music. Tunes with its interactive sound and vision software, memoball from Se-out-oh also club improvsed Dubstep Berford, and fellow memoball artist from Marseille, Philip Pett. London The Lithhouse, 10 September, 7.30pm-midnight, £4/£3, 020 7251 8787, www.duse.com/jagwal

### TICK OUTSIDE THE BOX

Does anxiety work in music? Afternoon improvisation workshops-com-performances hosted by Urban Myth and friends. Brighton Cowley Club, 14 September, 3.30-5.30pm, free, contact 01273 896104 in advance for membership info

### WERK

Surgeon on the decks and live sets from Ben Code, Address and Format-K, London Pesto: People, 11 September 9pm-2am, £8, www.werk-it.com

## Incoming

### ARGOS

Large audio-visual arts fest, investigating noise through a series of performances by Merbow, Zbigniew Rakowski, Pat Sansone, Massimo, Kevin Drumm, Philip Corner & Phebe Neville and Whitehouse. The Logos ensemble plays historic works by P. Manietti, George Bruch, Maurizio Kagel, Cornelius Cardew and others and there is a screening of films by artists of the Fluxus Movement. Brussels various locations, times & prices, 17-25 October, 0032 2 229 0003, www.argosarts.be

### FIFTH QUARTER OF THE GLOBE UK

Simon Fisher-Turner performs a suite of music from the films of Derek Jarmen. A string quartet and vocalist Melanie Popperstein join the composer for a live mix of Jarmen's films. Leeds The Warehouse (7 October), Beth Michael Tippett Centre (8), London Union Chapel (9), Easter Phoenix (10), Manchester Royal Northern College of Music (13)

### KILL YOUR TIMID NOTION

UK Risk taking three day international festival sponsored by The Wire involving music, film and installation. The impressive line-up features Cylo comprising RYX Media and Carsten Nicolai, Steve Rodia, Alva Noto, Philip Jeck, The User, Test Of Light Skin Brach, tribute featuring Lee Rarred, Alan Breeze, William Hooker and Christian Marcell, Surburbed Hand Of The Men, Ruins, Acid Mothers temple and an installation of 'lim' art by Gustav Deutsch with improvised accompaniment from Martin Savelle, Christian Fennell, Werner Delebeder & Bernhard Stangl. Dundee Contemporary Arts, 17-19 October, 01382 909 900, www.docd.org.uk

### TAMPERE JAZZ HAPPENING

FINLAND International jazz and improvised music festival featuring UN Came Bedrock, Billy Bang Quartet with Frank Lowe, William Parker's Healing Song, Raymond Boni & Joe Millard, Louis Seely's Napoli's Walls and Peter Brötzmann's Chicago

Tentet. The Wire publisher Tony Horrington takes part in a discussion on jazz and national identity with fellow journalists Stuart Nicholson and Howard Marshall. Tampere various venues, times & prices, www.tampere.fi

### WORLDS OF POSSIBILITY UK

Concert series celebrating the tenth anniversary of Domino Records. Clinic and Haze (4 October, London ICA); The Pastels, To Rococo Rot and Movements (12 ICA); James Yorkston and The Athletics, King Crocodile (3, London Cecil Sharp House); Jason Lowenstein and Leo Barlow play the songs of Sebald (14, London Cecil Sharp House); Bonnie 'Prince' Billy plus Adam - already said (14, London Cecil Sharp House); Four Tet, Mouse on Mars and Men Tunde plus DJ John Peel, Mandabla, Pram, Franz Ferdinand and Ginebra (17, London The End) and more. See www.dominorecords.co.uk

### LETHE FESTIVAL VOLUME FIVE

Five day celebration of sound art, improv and reductionist music. Highlights include sound artist Aino Suzuki, saxophonist Yoshinori Yonegawa (1 October), guitarist Teina Akiyama, the UK's Paul Wood on SPD record plays, amplified objects, mixer (27), Nabu Yoneda on daily junk, also saxophonist Masayoshi Usuki (3), electronics from Yukio Ito and Astro, koto player Hie Maki (4) on electronics set from former Fujisakihi drummer Kuro Takahashi (5), Airport Warehouse No 20, Garden Pet, Nagoya Port, 1-5 October, http://www.artport.org.nagoya.jp/

Out There items for inclusion in the October issue should reach us by Friday 29 August

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# Epiphanies



Rabble rouser: Robert Wyatt

**Robert Wyatt learns the value of cheap music from a Ray Charles ballad**

Before I can start, there's a caveat... well, two really. One, the conductor Sir Thomas Beecham said that the English don't know much about music but they like the noise it makes. The other is, Gunther Schuller, writing about jazz listeners, talks about the kind of cloth-eared lefties who think that "Strange Fruit" is a good song [Wyatt famously recorded the Billie Holiday song on a Rough Trade single in the 1980s]. I don't feel I'm an authority on music outside of what I know, there's all kinds of stuff about music I don't understand.

I'd been brought up to believe in serious music. For my Dad, most serious was Bartók and Hindemith. He had liked Fats Waller and Duke Ellington before the war, even though he didn't think they were serious music. I did, but my Dad knew they were real music at least, and as I was young, they were allowed. By then I was getting as much out of Gil Evans as I was out of Hindemith, and as far as I was concerned it was just as serious. But at that stage I still accepted the idea that there were intrinsically serious and shallow idioms, and my Dad's thing was that pop music was intrinsically shallow. I'd heard quite a lot of it because my sister had records, and they didn't interest me. So I didn't have a problem with Dad's idea.

Until I came across an LP called *The Genius Of Ray Charles*. I thought, Genius? How could he be a genius if he's only a popular singer? Clearly a misuse of the word. It was like that, I didn't really have any argument with my Dad. I really liked my parents and I liked what they liked, the art of the 20th century, the surrealists, the dadaists and all that stuff. But with Ray Charles, it was a difficult moment because as far as I can hear, bearing in mind my caveats, Ray Charles singing a ballad, even a soppy one like "Don't Let The Sun Catch You Crying", is as good as Bartók's *Violin Concerto* or Miles Davis. I knew it was a slushy pop song, just a tune with tinkly cocktail piano, and because it had violin on it, it didn't have any jazz cred. I couldn't even work out what the words were half the time, but I thought, it's an astonishing record, absolutely beautiful. Suddenly any idea of a hierarchy of art crumbled away in my mind, and as far as I was concerned, there was no intrinsically superior idiom. It

was only a small crack in the music listening in the house, but it opened the way for absolutely anything. I could now enjoy Buddy Holly or Beethoven or whatever. After that, I found out I was constantly going against the grain in the sense that every new idiom sets up a hierarchy: good versus naft, quality versus crap, and so on, and on my new trajectory I always seemed to be finding serious, solemn beauty in what was considered naft. Later, when I was making music myself, it was bit embarrassing because we [Soft Machine] weren't playing regular pop music. People said, "This is better than pop music, it is superior." Once again, I could see incipient hierarchies reemerging, like there was this need to have them.

On *The Genius Of*, one side was big band Ray Charles, "Let The Good Times Roll", things like that, and the other side was strings. Well, the jazz hierarchy at that time had it that the respectable side was the big band lot, the other side was the girls' stuff, and I always liked the girls' stuff. I went to absurd lengths, it now seems, to break this hierarchy. I was into The Bee Gees, Lynsey De Paul, The Monkees, anything, Gary Glitter? Let it roll. Fantastic. I wasn't just asserting something against an old guard but the very new guard as well, which was very busily constructing an intellectual hierarchy, of which we [Soft Machine] were pretty princes. It was completely mad and I thought, I have got to deal with this. So I did a Monkees song [in 1974, several years after leaving Soft Machine, Wyatt released "I'm A Believer" as a solo single.]

"Don't Let The Sun Catch You Crying" interested me as well politically. My parents and a lot of their friends on the Left, not revolutionaries, were egalitarian when it came to economic political issues. But in their minds an intellectual aristocracy had replaced the cultural aristocracy that they had relinquished and abandoned. Similarly, as much as the Socialist counterculture abandoned economic hierarchies in the Western sense, they vociferously embraced bourgeois cultural values and had an almost hysterical fear of popular culture. They were taken with a thing called improving music, improving culture, which is good for you, and naft culture, which is bad for you, and children must

be guarded away from all these bad things. The more I read about it, I realised that this tendency had been going on for centuries. The church, for example, used to have a problem with rabble music. Organised church music was elevating, and the music of the rabble, when they got pissed, caught sexual diseases and that sort of thing, was the bad kind. The church monitored the rabble with totalitarian verve, intervening constantly to break down the power of mob culture and mob music. Following on from that, you couldn't shock my parents' communist or egalitarian friends by saying, "I don't believe in God", but you could by saying, "I don't believe in Mozart".

Well, I really disagreed with that. The Left missed a trick there, because the idea that serious music was morally elevating took a bit of a battering after the Second World War. What they talked about as serious music, basically, was the music of the Austro-Hungarian empire. Opera, symphony and all the great structures of music gave us the Axis powers, and how morally elevating was that? There wasn't anything wrong with the music, but the claims made for it were ersatz religious claims made out of fear of the mob.

All this came out of listening to Ray Charles, who made it perfectly all right to be a genius and I have clung on to that key assertion nervously ever since. Even so, I hadn't yet finished with hierarchies myself. Before buying a record, which wasn't very often in those days, I went on and on subdividing jazz into participants and innovators and geniuses and not-geniuses. All right, we got the geniuses here: Thelonious Monk, yes; Charlie Mingus, yes; Charlie Parker, yeah; Duke Ellington, John Coltrane, yes... Ornette Coleman, can I buy Ornette Coleman? Well, OK, for the times, yeah?

Of course, I was missing the main event, which was hundreds and hundreds of people playing music and having a fantastic time doing it, out of which come some people with a few diamonds. But genius is in the whole culture, fermenting away in hundreds of different ways and every participant is part of it. Interview by Biba Kopf. Cuckooland is out this month on Hannibal

# The Wire T-shirts 2003



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